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OLD TESTAMENT DRAMAS

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# OLD TESTAMENT D R A M A S

By

H. E. SPENCE

WITH A FOREWORD BY ELBERT RUSSELL  
AND AN APPENDIX BY A. T. WEST



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## OLD TESTAMENT DRAMAS



# I

## *Foreword*

There are numerous indications of a revival of drama in the service of religion. The dramatizing of Biblical stories and the use of pageants in religious celebrations, and in the promotion of foreign missions, are among the most noteworthy signs of this revival. This is a healthful movement because it adds the resources of dramatic art to the means more commonly used for the interpretation and propagation of Christianity. Robert Browning asserts:

It is the glory and good of Art  
That Art remains the one way possible  
Of speaking truth.

It is not only the mission of art to make the truth *look* true but also to give it the *feel* of reality, and it is of more importance in religion to make the truth *feel* true than to make it *look* true. Religion must move the will, as the mere apprehension of fact and the assent of the reason can never move it. Abstract statements of religious truth, such as creeds and catechisms are relatively sterile. Religious truth must have the power which art gives to stir the imagination and emotions before it becomes spiritually effective. It is the function of religious art, particularly of the story, lyric, and drama, to create imaginary worlds in which God rules as He does in the world of outward experience, where the moral law is valid and where good and evil choices are seen to work themselves out to their inevitable destiny.

It is the mission of history to present human events in their time and space relations as well as in their causal relations. A good Roman historian, for example, must never let the reader

forget that Julius Caesar was killed some two thousand years ago and some four thousand miles away. But Shakespeare's drama fails of its purpose if it does not make the spectator forget time and space and bring him into the senate house to see the scene and experience the tragedy of Caesar's death.

In this way, by the aid of the imagination and emotions, it is possible for man to acquire vicarious wisdom, to pass through great moral experiences, and "to see the end from the beginning" without paying the price which such lessons cost in the school of actual experience. Moral experimentation in certain realms of life is too hazardous to be desirable if it is at all possible to acquire wisdom without the risks of personal experience. The Puritan mind believed that the only truth is the truth of fact and that works of imagination are essentially false; but works of the imagination, if they present the moral and spiritual world truly, initiate the reader or spectator correctly into the religious verities.

It is for such reasons that I welcome the contributions which this book of Biblical plays makes by using the dramatic form to reinforce the religious teachings of these Biblical stories.

It should be noted that they are not merely dramatizations of certain Biblical plots. They are rather creative treatments of the Biblical material. The writer has not attempted on the one hand a critical revision of these stories such as an historian would give. He has followed in the main the stories as found in the Old Testament. The Biblical stories were used by the Hebrew prophets to teach certain religious lessons and moral ideas. The writer of these plays has attempted to do the same in the form of drama. But, on the other hand, he has not been bound by the plots, characters, and incidents of the stories as they stand. Just as it is necessary for the story as a form of literature, to vary from the form of strict history for the sake of literary effectiveness, so in dramatizing the story corresponding changes are necessary. These departures consist partly in adding minor characters and incidents and in giving names to

unnamed characters, partly in modifying the plots themselves by additions and omissions.

In two respects the author has departed widely from Hebrew customs or Biblical traditions. First, human sacrifice in the time of personal or national extremity was practiced among the Hebrews and their neighbors both before and after the time of Abraham and Elijah. There is also evidence that at one time the first-born of men as well as animals were offered as sacrifices. In great emergencies, when human sacrifice was offered, it was naturally the first-born, the heir and best-beloved, who was the victim. There is no evidence, however, of which I am aware, that maidens were sacrificed in time of drought in the hope of securing rain. Such a practice is, however, known to have prevailed among other ancient peoples, such as the Mayas in Central America. Secondly, there seems to be no clear evidence of the introduction of the worship of the heavenly bodies into Israel (beyond the nomadic reverence of the new moon) until the reign of Manasseh, nearly two centuries after the time of Elijah. It was not a part of the cult of the Phoenician Baal.

These plays are, in my opinion, a real addition to the literature of religious edification and education.

ELBERT RUSSELL.

## II

# *Introduction*

The publication of this volume of Old Testament dramas is the outgrowth of work done by the author in his course in Religious Drama at Duke University, and is a part of that institution's policy of making its services available to the public wherever possible. There is an ever increasing interest in drama among church people today, and one of the main problems is finding suitable plays for production. Young people's organizations are constantly inquiring, "Where can we find a play?" After they have selected one, there arises the problem of royalty, which in almost every case amounts to from five to twenty-five dollars. Since there is usually no admission charge for church plays, these royalties are practically prohibitive. The dramas in this volume are sent out to the public for use without charge and without even the necessity of securing the permission of the author to produce them.

The plays have all been tested out, either by actual dramatization or radio broadcast, and it is believed that they are within the range of the ability of the average young people's group. Directions for their production may be found in the Appendix. In addition to their production on what is known as the legitimate stage, these dramas may be found useful for reading, for cast-reading, and for imitation radio-broadcast. The last-named method is coming more and more in vogue and presents one of the easiest and most attractive ways of religious entertainment. If costume is available and make-up desired, of course these will lend a sense of reality to the production. But they are not at all necessary for satisfactory results. The necessity for memorizing and for long and tedious drilling is also removed. Actors may be trained in reading

their parts, and then the play may be presented, either behind a screen as if coming from a studio, or a fake microphone may be erected, and the audience may see just how a broadcast is actually carried out in a studio. Thus both the play and the method will be of interest. Wherever there is provision made for local broadcasting, the actors may be in one section of the church and the loud-speaker in the main auditorium. This will heighten the sense of reality in the production. The lines written for the Announcer are to be used in case of radio broadcasting. Parts of these may be used by way of direction and explanation in the regular production of these plays. The Director of Dramatics will of course use his own judgment as to how much if any of these sections is to be used.

The author offers these plays to the public with the hope that they may add to the prevailing interest in dramatics now manifest in religious education. He acknowledges his indebtedness to Dean Elbert Russell of the School of Religion and Professor A. T. West of the Department of English, both of Duke University, for reading the plays and writing the foreword and treatise on production.

H. E. SPENCE.



### III

## *The Sacrifice of Isaac*

*Abraham Discovers the True God*

### PERSONS

ABRAHAM	DEBORAH, a maidservant
SARAH, his wife	OLD CANAANITE WOMAN
ISAAC, their son	A CANAANITE PRIEST
ELIEZER, a manservant	CANAANITE MEN AND WOMEN

### PLACES

ACT I.	<i>Abraham's Tent at Dawn</i>
ACT II.	<i>Mt. Moriah, Noon, Three Days Later</i>
ACT III.	<i>Abraham's Tent, Twilight, Three Days Later</i>

### PROPERTIES

<i>A lamp</i>	<i>Wooden box studded with nails for</i>
<i>Tables</i>	<i>rain-making</i>
<i>Benches or stools</i>	<i>Wind-whistle or vacuum cleaner</i>
<i>Bundles of food</i>	<i>for wind machine</i>
<i>A snare drum for a tom-tom</i>	<i>Bundle of fagots for altar</i>
<i>Bass drum for rumbling thunder</i>	
<i>Strip of sheet iron for sharp</i>	
<i>thunder</i>	

---

### ACT I—Morning

ANNOUNCER: At the beginning of this series of dramas depicting the development of faith among the Hebrew people and the coming of the idea of the kingdom of heaven, it will be well to note the religious conditions at the time of our first episode. In Abraham's world there was a current belief that the gods were evil and demanded human sacrifice. It was but a common-

place occurrence for a father to sacrifice his first-born, his most precious possession, in order to avert the evil consequences that would follow this refusal. The people of the neighborhood were also interested in seeing that the will of the gods was carried out in order that they might be protected. Abraham believed in a different sort of God, but he was so impressed with the popular superstitions of his times that he imagined he heard the call of God saying unto him: "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest—and offer him." At this point the story begins.

As the curtain rises, Sarah is seen in Abraham's tent just before dawn. She is busying herself preparing food, and apparently getting together provisions. A small lamp is on the table at one side of the tent. Sarah is old, stooped, and gray. She wears a long, loose dress. She is weeping silently as she works. The tent opens at the left, and Abraham enters. He also is old and gray, has a long beard, and is dressed in a flowing robe. He carries a small, burning taper in his hand. When he sees Sarah, he stands gazing compassionately at her, and finally speaks tenderly to her.

---

ABRAHAM:

What, Sarah, up so soon? Thou needst rest;  
The day doth hardly dawn; its waning star  
Hath barely shed its lustre 'cross the sky;  
Gray morn, like some belated caravan,  
Creeps o'er the hills, the darkness scattering.

SARAH:

Rest! Rest! What mocking term! No more shall rest  
Be in my bosom; nevermore shall day  
Break on a night of peaceful rest for me.  
A term to torture with—my very dreams,  
If thou must offer Isaac, will abound  
At best with memories of his loveliness;  
At worst will torture with his dying cries.

ABRAHAM:

Thou wilt not hear his dying cries; 'tis far  
To heights of Mount Moriah; there we go

To sacrifice the lad; mine ears alone  
Shall hear his dying wails—

SARAH (*interrupting*):

Thine ears alone?

Mine ears have heard his cries since first the day  
Thou toldest me of this abomination;  
This cruel custom of the Canaanites,  
In which they offer up their first-born sons  
Unto the gods, lest haply ill-luck fall.  
I hate this cruel custom; why shouldest thou  
Be forced to follow it? If one must die,  
That the blood-thirsty gods may be appeased,  
Why then not Ishmael, that Hagar's son?

ABRAHAM:

Full well thou knowest, Sarah, that the lad  
Was not considered as my legal heir;  
Thou wouldest not have it thus, and so he fled,  
And now it is too late; I know not where  
To find him, even though he be alive.

SARAH:

Ah me! That I should e'er have driv'n him forth!  
Far better bear the insult of the slave  
And risk my husband's love, than lose my son.  
But is it certain that this thing must be?  
How can I give my son in sacrifice?  
How can I suffer all the loneliness  
When he shall leave me to return no more?  
(*Sits down and muses half hysterically*)  
The lovely days we've spent together here!  
Watching the flocks and herds upon the hills,  
Plucking the flowers; hearing the birds' sweet songs.  
Would I had never borne him rather than  
Have him thus snatched to such a cruel fate.  
(*Turns to Abraham frantically, yet respectfully*)  
Is it too late? Tell me, doth no escape

Present itself? Perchance thou dost mistake  
The Voice—Good husband, say it may be so.

ABRAHAM:

No, Wife, I heard it, would to God I could  
Believe I heard it not. I must obey.

SARAH:

Art thou afraid, then, that thou must obey?  
Where is the friendship now that did exist  
Between thee and the gods—so soon forgot?  
What more could they demand than has been done?  
Didst thou not leave thy father's house and go  
Into a land of strangers at their word?  
Have not the angels eaten of thy food?  
And did not God himself converse with thee  
About the doom of Sodom? Where is now  
This former friendship! May he not relent  
And let thee spare thy son and yet escape?

ABRAHAM:

I do this not through fear, but to obey  
The voice that bade me sacrifice my son;  
And I am willing to obey that Voice  
E'en tho' it leave me heirless and alone.

SARAH (*frantically*):

How canst thou suffer such a monstrous thing?  
Methinks thine heart would burst in utter grief.

ABRAHAM:

The others suffer when they sacrifice  
Their offspring. Can I show less willingness  
To do the will of heaven? I must yield.

SARAH:

Did not God promise that thy seed should be  
As numerous as the stars that stud the skies,  
Those lovely curtains of His dwelling-place?

ABRAHAM:

Long years ago such promise he did make.

Last night I could not sleep, for agony  
Hath sorely wrung my heart strings, too; I rose,  
Went out beneath the silence of the stars;  
They seemed to mock me with their steadfastness,  
As though the God that made them could not change  
But would his ancient promises make sure.

SARAH:

How can he keep his promise if our son  
Be sacrificed?

ABRAHAM:

'Tis not for me to say;  
His ways are wonderful, perhaps again  
His blessings he may send, and thou mayst bear  
Another son—

SARAH (*interrupting*):

Another son! Too late—  
The other was a miracle, and I  
Am even older now. And could I bring  
A son once more into the world, I would  
Not raise another to be food for gods.

ABRAHAM:

Perhaps—who knows—he'll raise him from the dead,  
Just as he caused that Enoch should not die.

SARAH (*weeping bitterly*):

No—nevermore—he will return no more.  
When thou hast drained his blood to 'suage their thirst,  
And burned his body that the smoke may rise  
As incense to their eager nostrils, then  
It is too late. He will return no more.  
Through all the darkness of the coming years  
I shall behold the flames that licked his blood;  
And, starting from my nightmare, call to him,  
Reach out my hand to where his empty bed  
Will mock me in the darkness—(*Rises and goes to the door  
of the tent and looks out. Turns and continues*)

Such a dawn!

So glorious; yet the very heavens should weep  
On such a dismal day (*Noise outside of someone approaching*) but here he comes;  
He must not see me weeping (*Isaac enters.*)  
My precious lamb, what dost thou up so soon?

ISAAC:

I rose up early so that we might start  
On the long trip which Father said we'd take.

SARAH (*giving him bundle of food*):

Here, take this food and go my precious lad,  
To Eliezer, help him to prepare  
The caravan, that ye may soon depart.  
(*As Isaac leaves, an old woman enters the tent. She looks wistfully at Sarah and then speaks.*)

OLD WOMAN:

And so the fatal day hath come at last!  
Mine heart hath sorrowed for thee; I have felt  
The anguish that now tortureth thine heart.  
'Tis many years since they with cruel hands  
Dragged my dear boy away to meet his doom—  
(*Noise of drums and tom-toms in distance*)  
The priest hath heard and now his followers  
Are making ready for this awful hour.  
(*While drums continue in the distance, other men and women enter the tent.*)

SARAH:

I bid you welcome even though mine heart  
Is saddened, and can offer naught of cheer;  
My son is taken for the sacrifice. (*Weeps.*)

FIRST WOMAN (*alarmed*):

Thou hast no cause for weeping; stay thy tears;  
The gods will be offended if thou weep  
Because thy son is offered unto them.

SARAH:

The gods! I hoped they would be kind to me  
And not demand my son; for Abraham  
Hath been a friend to God—But no escape!

SECOND WOMAN:

Why art thou better than the rest of us  
That thou shouldst hope to have thy son escape?  
We heard it whispered once that Ishmael  
Was banished that he might escape the gods.

FIRST MAN:

Ishmael! The gods would not demand his blood:  
He was the son of slave; the gods demand  
Our very best; the dearest to our hearts.

SECOND MAN:

'Tis good he wasn't for that purpose sent,  
The gods would be enraged, a fearful curse  
Would fall upon us were they thwarted thus.

OLD WOMAN:

A curse! The sacrifice will not appease  
Their fiendish wants. I gave my son to them!  
They fed his body to the greedy flames,  
And yet the gods have never smiled on me.

SECOND WOMAN:

Thou didst begrudge thy son. And so the gods  
Were sore displeased—and so thy trouble came.

ABRAHAM:

I do not think that we are punished thus;  
For God is good, his mercy doth extend  
To all who love him and obey his will.

SECOND MAN:

The gods are cruel, thou must know the fate  
Of Sodom and Gomorrah in the flame?  
They did not fear the gods, and so they died.

ABRAHAM:

Those cities were destroyed for wickedness.

God would have saved them if ten righteous men  
Had lived in Sodom.

SECOND MAN:

How are we to know  
If cruelty or love directs the gods?

ABRAHAM:

Man's heart must tell him—

SARAH (*interrupting*):

Then thine heart should speak  
And tell thee that the gods do not demand  
Our precious boy.

ABRAHAM:

There is a higher law  
Than our desires and we must yield to it.

SARAH:

No higher law is to a mother known  
Than love for those she brings into the world;  
She risks her life to give them their first breath,  
She willingly will risk it to protect  
From danger, be it man or fiend or god:  
The very race might perish, she would save  
Her offspring tho' the rest of earth were lost.

*(Drums and tom-toms sound louder immediately outside  
the tent. The priest enters. He is dressed in a long,  
dark robe and has a turban on his head, decorated with  
snakes, toads, and other gruesome things.)*

PRIEST:

Who speaks of sparing? Whom the gods desire  
They must receive, no matter what the hurt;  
A curse is otherwise from heaven sent  
To spoil us all. Ye dare not spare the boy.

ABRAHAM:

I dare to save him if the fear of hurt  
Were all that drives me to this loathsome task.



PRIEST:

Ye dare! Speak not the word; the very thought  
May bring a curse upon us, careless fool!

ABRAHAM:

I do not fear the gods, nor do I give  
My son to satisfy their senseless rage.  
I do not worship one who thirsts for blood;  
Nor do I understand the call he gave;  
I do not know why he should want my son;  
I sacrifice him, though, at his command:  
To fail would be to doubt his faithful word.  
I shall not fail, but still I fear no curse.  
And were it only to avoid a curse  
I'd save the lad and let the curse descend!  
(*Priest and others cry out in horror.*)

PRIEST:

Ye dare not, for the gods will sure destroy;  
Ye dare not spare him. If thou slay him not  
Then we will sacrifice him to the gods.

ABRAHAM:

This is no time nor place for us to strive;  
Leave me and mine alone unto our grief.  
(*Priest and followers chant a death dirge and gradually retire.*)

PRIEST:

Build of wood the funeral pyre,  
Lead the victim to the fire;  
For the gods are worn and weak;  
Human sacrifice they seek:  
For their strength they find it good—  
Bone and marrow, flesh and blood,  
Skin and fat and heart and brain  
Bring to them their strength again.

ALL IN CONCERT:

Build of wood the funeral pyre,

Lead the victim to the fire.

*(All except the old woman leave. This challenge is shouted back.)*

PRIEST:

Ye dare not spare him, 'tis the gods' command.

*(Death drums gradually die out in distance.)*

OLD WOMAN:

Save him or not; 'tis all the same to them.

*(Old woman sinks apathetically at side of tent.)*

ABRAHAM:

The caravan is ready to depart.

SARAH:

Here is the food; enough, I hope for all.

ABRAHAM:

The servants and the lad must have their meat;

I have no heart for food—here comes the lad.

*(Isaac and Eliezer appear.)*

ELIEZER:

The caravan awaiteth thy command.

ABRAHAM:

'Tis well; since we must go. The sooner gone

The better. How I hate the task ahead!

ISAAC:

All ready for the journey, Father, come.

Mother, I wish that thou wert coming, too.

Father, why cannot Mother go with us?

ABRAHAM:

Thy Mother will be busy in the tent;

And, too, the journey is too hard for her.

ISAAC:

The journey is too hard? How far is it?

How long shall we be gone from Mother, then?

Will we be back tomorrow, or at most

Another day? Mother, my little goat

Will hardly eat, I think he must be sick  
Take care of him until I come again.

SARAH (*choking*):

Peace, peace, my son, I'll nourish all thy beasts.

ISAAC:

Weep not, dear Mother, we will soon return.

*(All leave. Sarah sits as if numbed for a moment. Then comes the distant sound of the death drums, which apparently jars her from her dazed condition. Starting up, she wails.)*

SARAH:

Till he come back; till he come back again!

And I shall never see his lovely face;

Oh God, my boy, my boy!

*(She shrieks and falls over in a faint. The old woman sits silently staring from the background. Death drums are heard in the distance.)*

---

## ACT II—Noon

ANNOUNCER: Three days have passed. The caravan has come to the foot of Mount Moriah. The day is beautiful and clear. There is not a fleck of cloud in the skies. The scene is laid on the top of the mountain. An altar has been erected in the center of the open space. A thicket grows densely at one side. Isaac lays a stick of wood on the altar and goes away for another. Abraham and Eliezer stand in the foreground. Abraham speaks.

---

ABRAHAM:

The work is almost finished, now return

To where the men await thee; I will stay

Until the deed is done, and then will come.

Be not impatient nor alarmed if I

Perchance should linger with the little lad  
Awhile, for I am loathe to take his life.

ELIEZER:

Is there no help, my Master, no escape?  
I somehow dared to hope the Voice that called  
Thee to this monstrous task would yet relent:  
Forgive my rashness, but I dared to hope.

ABRAHAM:

Thy faithful heart doth only beat like mine,  
Thy mind holds hopes like those that grimly die  
Within my desperate breast; I, too, have hoped  
And dreamed, aye vainly have I plead with God.  
But no word comes, I dare not thwart his will.

ELIEZER:

His will be done, but Master is there aught  
Of service I can do?

ABRAHAM:

Nay, nothing more.

I shall not soon forget thy kindness, Friend;  
For servant though thou art, thou art a friend,  
Yea, more, a very brother. Still mine heart  
Desireth only God to see my grief.

*(Isaac comes up in time to hear the last words.)*

ISAAC:

To see thy grief; of what grief dost thou speak?  
Is it so bad to kill the sacrifice?  
Was that why Mother wept when we left home?

ABRAHAM:

Thy Mother wept, my son, for loneliness.

ISAAC:

Father, the fire is here, the altar made;  
Where is the lamb that thou will sacrifice?

ABRAHAM:

My son, God will provide himself a lamb.

ISAAC:

Father, doth God in every case provide?

ABRAHAM:

My son, he never yet was known to fail.

ISAAC:

Then, Father, he must be so very good,

If he provideth, yet the other boys

Think God is wicked, cruel, most severe.

Father, did Mother think that God doth ill?

Was she afraid, is that why Mother wept?

ABRAHAM:

Thy Mother was afraid some harm might come

To thee, and that is why thy Mother wept.

ISAAC:

But God will care for us if he is good.

ABRAHAM:

He may have different plans for us, my son.

ISAAC:

So we should do just what he willeth, then.

ABRAHAM:

Thy childish lips have spoken; unto thee

God seemeth to have made his wishes known;

My son, thou art the lamb. The sacrifice

Is thy dear self. Come, I must bind thee now

And lay thee on the altar—'tis his will.

*(Isaac submits fearfully and yet unprotestingly. Abraham binds his arms and feet and lays him on the altar. He then turns with his face towards the audience, lifts it toward heaven, and speaks.)*

ABRAHAM:

This is the end, then, of my wondrous dream;

A dream of multiplying 'til the earth

Should all be filled with those who bear my name:

And e'en that dream grows dim before the thought

Of losing thee, my own beloved son.

*(Kneels at altar, looks tenderly at Isaac, then raises face again to heaven and continues.)*

ABRAHAM:

Why shouldst thou crave the blood of helpless lads?

Thou who art just, why shouldst thou want his life,

Or threaten vengeance if I fail to slay? *(Hesitates)*

Nay, nay, it cannot be, the God I know

Licks not his lips in greed for human gore.

'Tis but the curse of ignorance and fear:

He would not wreak his spite on helpless ones

If I should free my lad and take him home;

E'en though displeased, his wrath would fall on me

And not on others *(Rises with his face turned defiantly toward heaven)*

I am not afraid,

For though thou slayest me, I'd gladly give

My life if it would only save my boy. *(Hesitates)*

But yet thou callest and I must obey.

*(Lifts his knife in his hand as if to strike)*

Farewell, my son, for God hath called for thee. *(Hesitates again)*

'Tis false, 'tis false; God doth not thirst for blood.

He is a God of love, he will not curse:

And if perchance the evil gods hold sway

I do defy them, let them do their worst.

*(Cuts thongs and turns Isaac loose, lifts him from the altar and clasps him to his breast. A mysterious noise is heard as if coming from the skies. Abraham waits for a moment in awe and then speaks in hushed and yet tense tones.)*

What sayest thou, Lord? Thou didst not wish my son?

Thou triedst my faith and now art satisfied?

Then it is true, thou art a God of Love,

And wantest human hearts, not human lives.

A ram? A ram! There in the thicket caught?  
And I may offer him as sacrifice  
And take my boy back to his mother's side?  
Thank God! Thank God!

---

### ACT III—*Evening*

ANNOUNCER: Again three days have passed. It is twilight in Abraham's tent. Sarah and her servant, Deborah, the wife of Eliezer, are in the tent. Sarah is all disheveled and has been mourning in sackcloth and ashes. There are slight flashes of lightning and a distant rumble of thunder. Sarah apparently is aroused at the noise of the thunder.

---

SARAH:

What is that rumbling sound? The noise of thunder?

DEBORAH:

Yes, Mistress, 'tis the sign of coming storm.

*(Deborah walks to the door and looks out.)*

The skies grow dark and threaten angrily;

A lowering cloud bedims the western skies,

All signs denote a fierce and stormy night.

SARAH:

Methinks 'tis time the caravan returned;

I fear 'tis overtaken by the storm.

DEBORAH:

It is the seventh day since they departed:

Three days my Master said would be required

To make the journey, three for their return;

One day should be sufficient—*(Suddenly realizes what she is saying and stops abruptly)*

SARAH *(speaking gently)*:

Never, mind,

Good Deborah, thou needst not stay thy speech

No mention of the day could hurt me more:  
Mine heart strings have grown numb to grief and pain.

DEBORAH:

How hard 'twill be, good Mistress, to forget.

SARAH (*moaning*):

Forget! Forget! I never shall forget;  
My days are feeble and at best but few,  
But should I live as long as those whose days  
Approached a thousand years I'd not forget.  
And yet forget I must ere madness comes.  
Too, for the sake of Abraham I must:  
His heart is grieved and broken, I must lift  
The load of sorrow that doth sadden him.  
Bring me my loveliest robe. I must arouse.  
I will anoint myself. Poor Abraham!  
How well do I remember in those years,  
When we were young, how wistfully he waited  
For the glad hour when he should have an heir;  
How sadly, yet how tenderly, he looked  
On my misfortune when no children came:  
How proud we were when I was blest at last  
And little Isaac lay within my arms.  
(*Bursts out weeping afresh*)  
I must not weep, yet, Deborah, I must;  
Too late for other children; Isaac gone;  
How shall I bear the loneliness again!  
(*Deborah brings toilet articles and helps Sarah with her  
toilet.*)

DEBORAH:

Perhaps forgetfulness will come at last;  
Time cureth saddest grief and healeth wounds  
That seem, when fresh received, incurable.

SARAH:

Forgetfulness! Oh, say the word no more,  
I shall control my grief, but not forget—



When night doth come and spread her coverlet  
Of darkness o'er the earth, I, too, shall look  
To spread the cover o'er his little bed:  
When morn doth greet the world with sunny smile  
I shall await his smiling face in vain.  
Oh, God, the days can promise no relief,  
The nights can bring no solace for my grief:  
At dawn I long to see the eventide,  
At eventide the shadows cast a gloom  
Until I yearn for sunrise and the day.  
(*Thunder rumbles louder.*)

DEBORAH:

The darkness and the blustering storm draw nigh,  
The winds are howling and the great gusts sweep  
The clouds of dust bewild'ring cross the sky,  
There is a smell of much rain in the air.  
(*Lightning and thunder continue. Wind howls.*)

SARAH:

Blow, blustering winds, aye blow and vent your spite;  
Howl in your anger, scourge the desert sands,  
Exhaust yourself in shrieks and howling rage:  
Aye, ye may rage, but I must conquer grief;  
Must curb my sorrows, quell my well of woe;  
Your drops of grief may fall in torrents, mine  
Must dry within my tearless sockets; grief  
Would bring me comfort—but I must not grieve.  
Belated rain, why wept ye not in woe  
And drowned with grief the fire that burned my boy?  
Ye winds, blow lightly, tenderly, lest far  
Ye strow his precious ashes—Pitying God  
Help me to conquer grief. He must not find  
Me sad and weeping when he shall return.

DEBORAH:

The lightnings flash and flare more fiercely now;  
The storm will soon arrive.

SARAH:

The lightning's flash,  
Yea, and these very flashes bring to mind  
The fearful flames that slew my precious son.  
Last night I restless slept, and in my sleep,  
A dream disturbed me: in my dream I stood  
On heights of Mount Moriah, saw my boy  
Bound on the altar, watched the greedy flames  
Leap high above him, heard his piteous cries.  
I started, woke, 'twas but the lightning's glare  
From passing clouds; the cries methought I heard  
Were but the wailing of the distant wind.  
But worse, yea even worse, in fitful sleep  
I sank again; my dream returned once more:  
I dreamed he was alive and mine again,  
I clasped him to my side and then awoke;  
I heard again the mocking of the wind.  
*(Death drum is heard in the distance, blending with the  
noise of the thunder.)*

DEBORAH *(excitedly)*:

Mistress, the drum! What can its beating mean?  
And what the snarling of the angry crowd?  
*(Deborah goes to the door and looks out. Turns excitedly.)*  
The caravan approacheth; at its front  
Rideth the Master *(Hesitates)* and—it cannot be,  
But—yes—no—yes—it IS the little lad!

SARAH *(excitedly and yet despairingly)*:

The little lad! My son! Oh mock me not!  
*(Voice of Abraham is heard at door of tent, addressing  
servants)*

ABRAHAM:

See that the beasts are sheltered from the storm.  
*(Abraham enters with Isaac. Sarah clasps the boy to her  
bosom and weeps.)*

SARAH:

My boy, my precious boy, and mine again!

ABRAHAM:

Yes, back again, dear Wife. For at the last  
A voice called saying: "Hurt thou not the lad,  
I only wished to test thy willingness,  
To see if faith would last thee to the end."  
I sacrificed a ram which in the bush  
Nearby was fastened by its horns, instead.  
And so I brought thy son again to thee.

SARAH:

Praise be to God, he did not want my boy.  
*(Death drums come nearer, mingling with thunder.)*

ELIEZER:

The priest approacheth, followed by the crowd;  
They seem excited, and I fear some harm.

SARAH *(defiantly)*:

When God demanded Isaac there was naught  
That could be said against his will, but now  
That murderous priest and crowd must be withstood:  
Call out the serving men and show them fight.

ABRAHAM:

There is no cause for bloodshed, let them come.  
*(Death drum comes nearer and nearer. Death dirge is  
heard again outside the tent.)*

VOICE:

Yield up the lad that we may sacrifice  
Him to the gods ere that their vengeance fall  
Upon us all.

ABRAHAM *(going to door)*:

Pray enter, all of you.  
*(Priest and followers crowd into the tent.)*

PRIEST:

And so thou dost defy and cheat the gods

And bring back that which thou shouldst sacrifice,  
Now yield him up, the gods demand their prey.

ABRAHAM:

The gods are satisfied. They do not want  
A human victim.

PRIEST:

Thou shalt not escape.

Thy son shall die to please the angry gods:  
They frown upon us, all the skies are black;  
Their angry breath doth sweep in stormy rage,  
Their eyes flash fire from heaven in their wrath;  
The darkness spreadeth o'er us like a pall  
We must avenge their wrongs, or we must die.  
*(Light grows dimmer and dimmer, and lightning flashes  
more fiercely. Storm rages. More thunder and wind.)*

ABRAHAM:

Why must thou be avenger to the gods?  
Are they so weak they cannot right their wrongs?  
Leave them to wreak their vengeance on my head.

PEOPLE:

List not to him, he will evade this task,  
And cause the gods to curse *us* in their wrath.

PRIEST:

Thou hast evaded once the wrath of man,  
When mighty Nimrod thrust thee in the fire;  
The gods stood with thee then, but thou hast now  
Turned 'gainst their wishes, they must be avenged.

ABRAHAM:

Then let them turn their vengeance on my head.  
See how the heavens lower, the wild winds rage,  
The lightnings flash, the thunders roar as though  
The gods would sweep us from the very earth.

*(The light fades away into almost complete darkness. Light  
goes almost out. A loud crash of thunder is followed  
by complete darkness, except for intermittent flashes  
of lightning.)*

Now let them do their worst, if they have aught  
Against me, let them strike me with their darts!  
If I have done their will, then let the storm  
Abate and light return unto the earth.

*(Light begins to grow stronger. Wind and thunder die away.)*

PEOPLE:

Nay, nay, a trick! *(Light grows brighter.)*

PRIEST:

No trick, a miracle!

ABRAHAM:

Good friends, I bound my son for sacrifice,  
Drew back my hand, but heard the voice of God  
Call from the opened heavens: "Slay not the lad;  
I do not ask for human sacrifice,  
I want obedience and love from man." *(Light grows brighter.)*

The light groweth stronger and the storm is past;  
Past, too, your night of fear, the gods are good.  
No more your children need be sacrificed.  
Go, worship God in love and not in fear.  
*(All leave. Sarah sits with Isaac pressed close to her breast.  
Abraham walks to the door of the tent and looks out.)*

ABRAHAM:

They have departed and their fear has gone.  
The storm is past. The skies are clear again;  
The stars shine out in brilliance as of yore  
Steadfast, immovable—they tell of God—  
A God unchanging, merciful and just,  
Whose love endureth as the eternal stars.  
*(Soft music or hymn of trust.)*

CURTAIN

# IV

## Joseph and His Brethren

*A Dreamer Whose Dreams Came True*

### PERSONS

REUBEN	} older brothers of Joseph	JOSEPH, a young Hebrew
SIMEON		AMNAH, servant to Joseph
JUDAH		TORAH, Ishmaelite chieftain
PHARAOH, King of Egypt		SOOTHSAYERS
AHOR, Pharaoh's butler		EGYPTIAN SOLDIERS

### PLACES

- ACT I. *Near a Pit on the Road to Egypt*  
 ACT II. *The Throne Room of Pharaoh*  
 ACT III. *The Palace Hall of Joseph in Egypt*

### PROPERTIES

<i>Rings for Pharaoh</i>	<i>Coat of many colors for Joseph</i>
<i>Staves for shepherds</i>	<i>Bundle of provisions</i>
<i>Golden chain for Joseph</i>	<i>Large chair for throne</i>
<i>Spears for Egyptian soldiers</i>	<i>Benches or stools</i>
<i>Shackles for prisoners</i>	<i>Metal disks or large coins for money</i>
<i>Cup</i>	
<i>Crown for Pharaoh</i>	<i>Fans for slaves</i>

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### ACT I—*The Dreamer Sold*

ANNOUNCER: The early government of the Hebrew people was a patriarchy—the rulership of the Father. Abraham received the promise from God and transferred this with his blessing to Isaac, his son. Jacob, the younger son of Isaac, through stratagem, cheated his brother Esau of the birthright and became the acknowledged leader of the clan. Esau threatened him, and he

fled to his Uncle Laban, whom he served fourteen years for his two wives, Leah and Rachel. He loved Rachel more than he did Leah, and although the latter gave birth to ten sons before Rachel brought forth any, Jacob loved Joseph, the older son of Rachel, and gave him preference over his brothers. This naturally caused jealousy, and when Jacob gave Joseph a coat of many colors as a symbol of authority, their rage was unbounded.

As the scene opens, the older brothers are in the fields with their herds. They are awaiting the provisions which Jacob usually sent them each week. They are a day late this time, and this delay is causing vexation. Simeon complains.

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SIMEON:

I am ahungered, bring me more of food.

JUDAH:

The food hath all been eaten; no supplies  
Have come to us within the week that's past:  
Careless indeed our Father hath become;  
Eight days have gone since Joseph came to us,  
I cannot guess what causeth the delay.

SIMEON:

Joseph, the dreamer! In his fevered mind  
He thinketh himself king, perchance a god;  
Mayhap he lingereth with some desert tribe,  
So filled with his ambitions and his dreams  
He hath no time to waste on food for us.

REUBEN:

'Tis hate and jealousy that fill thy breast,  
And thou art spiteful to the foolish lad;  
Nothing that he can do will please thee now,  
The reason for thy hatred now confess:  
Thou dost despise him for this fault alone,  
His Father loveth Joseph more than us.

SIMEON:

And is that fault not fault enough, I pray?

There are ten sons, each older than this lad,  
And each by custom over him should sway;  
*And yet the first-born's right is given him;*  
Thou knowest, Reuben, that this rule is thine.

REUBEN:

Still, if I do not care, why shouldst thou?  
It is my right and no concern of thine.

SIMEON:

Nay, thou art wrong, my brother, the concern  
*Is mine; nor mine alone; it toucheth all*  
Whom Leah, our Mother, brought into the world.  
'Tis a reflection on her sacred name  
As though she were a harlot, not a wife,  
And we illegal sons of handmaid born.  
God! How I hate him and his vexing dreams!  
Eleven sheaves perforce must bow to his,  
Eleven brothers all must yield to him;  
So sun and moon and the eleven stars;  
Both earth and heaven yield to his control.

JUDAH:

Simeon is right, I think we must agree,  
Even our Father did not seem so pleased,  
But was disgusted at the lad's conceit.  
And did ye watch him with his stride and strut,  
Flaunting his coat of many colors gay?  
The meaning of this colored coat we know,  
Our Father's seal, giving authority  
To Rachel's son above the ten of us.

REUBEN:

Remember, Brothers, he is but a lad,  
It may be that he has no other choice  
Than linger on the tedious desert road,  
And thus delay his coming with the food.  
The trip is hardly safe for one so young.



JUDAH:

'Tis strange the favorite is sent alone;  
Something might happen to the precious boy.

SIMEON:

Something indeed may happen even here;  
Had I my way the lad would meet his death  
And boast no more of bowing sheaves and stars.

REUBEN:

Stop! Art thou mad? What nonsense dost thou speak?

SIMEON:

Mad? Aye, stark mad, if madness it may be  
That biddeth me avenge my Mother's wrongs;  
Resent unfairness at our Father's hands:  
'Twas not our Mother's fault her Father lied  
And forced her on our Father as his wife;  
'Twas not her fault she was not beautiful  
Nor that her lovely sister bore no sons,  
While to our Mother ten were born and each  
With more of right to rule than Joseph hath.  
Our Father treateth her as though she were  
Her sister's handmaid, and her sons ill born.  
These insults to our Mother I resent,  
If that be madness, madness I admit.

REUBEN:

Stay thou thy quarreling, someone draweth nigh;  
It may be that the lad doth come with food,  
Thou mayst be pleased when thou hast had thy fill.

SIMEON:

'Tis not so easy such a quarrel to stay,  
If it be he, I think he should be slain;  
And it is he, the dreamer, let him die;  
We then shall see what cometh of his dreams.  
*(Joseph comes near. They stare at him with ill-disguised  
hatred. Before he notices their anger he begins to tell  
them another dream.)*

JOSEPH:

My brothers, I have had another dream,  
So wonderful I scarce can wait to tell—

SIMEON:

This dream will have to wait, a stop must be  
To all the folly of thy silly dreams;  
They end or we will put an end to thee.

JOSEPH:

Ye dare not touch a hair upon my head,  
Else will I tell my Father of your faults.

JUDAH:

No thought of Father will avail thee now,  
For thou thy Father never more shalt see.

JOSEPH:

I say ye dare not touch me, do ye hear?  
This coat doth clothe me with authority.

JUDAH:

The many-colored coat doth not avail,  
Its many colors soon will blend in one—  
That color red, and dyed with thine own blood.

REUBEN:

Again I tell thee, Judah, thou art mad;  
Thou surely dost not mean to slay the lad:  
They will not hurt thee, lad, be not alarmed.

JUDAH:

Thou laggard, dost thou think to speak for us?  
If thou lack courage, yield thy birthright up,  
Submit thy mother to this useless shame;  
But as for us, we now will take revenge;  
Kill him and throw his body in the pit,  
And tell our father that his son was slain  
By some wild beast which quite devoured the corpse  
And left his garments torn and drenched in blood.

REUBEN:

Why have his blood forever on our heads?

If thou must have revenge, then be content  
To throw him in yon pit to perish there;  
Our hands will thus be clean of stains of blood.

JUDAH:

Thy plan is better. Thou for once art wise;  
Through the slow days it taketh him to starve,  
The dreamer now may have his fill of dreams;  
Before he goeth to the last long sleep  
In the dense darkness where no dream can come.

SIMEON:

And as thou sayest, neither on our heads  
Nor on our hands will be the dreamer's blood:  
I should forever feel its burning touch  
And see its slow stain spreading on my hands!

JOSEPH:

Surely ye do not mean to do me harm;  
I have but told you of the dreams that come  
Unbidden to my mind both night and day;  
I do not seek nor have I asked for them,  
'Tis not my fault; I cannot help their coming.

SIMEON:

But we can help that they shall not come true,  
Thou hast, young dreamer, dreamed thy very last  
Unless thou dreamest dead. Over the rim,  
Into the bottom of the pit with him!

JOSEPH:

Oh spare me! In God's name, oh mercy show!  
For I have never done you harm; no fault  
Of mine it is if Father loveth me  
Better than all of you. I cannot help it.

JUDAH:

But we can help it; and we soon shall see  
If unto Benjamin he now shall turn  
And lavish all his love upon thy brother,  
And show our Mother still to be despised,

And treated as the handmaid of her sister.  
*(They throw him over the edge of the pit while he frantically protests and moans.)*

SIMEON:

Come, Judah, let us leave this pit of grief,  
How brave he sounds, the proud and haughty dreamer,  
Wailing in woe as though a little child. *(They leave.)*

REUBEN:

Dear lad, do not despair, keep up thy hopes;  
When they are gone I yet may rescue thee,  
And take thee to thy Father's house in peace.  
*(Reuben goes away. The cries of Joseph come piteously and finally feebly from the pit.)*

SIMEON:

And shall we never cease to hear his cries?  
My heart would break were I to listen long;  
I shall go mad if I must stay to hear.  
Far better slay the lad and hush his cries,  
E'en though his blood should be upon our hands,  
Than hear the echoes of his cries forever.  
*(Sound of approaching caravan; chanting of camel song)*  
What is that noise? It is a caravan;  
A band of wand'ring merchants on their way  
To Egypt. What a piece of luck for us!  
We can be rid forever from this lad  
Nor have his blood upon our hands and heads,  
Nor yet have memory of his dying cries.

JUDAH:

A pretty piece of money he will bring,  
We can divide the price among ourselves,  
Eke out our scanty living and destroy  
This hated dreamer all at one fell blow.

SIMEON:

The traders are a band of Ishmaelites,  
Still, better luck, no questions will be asked;

Since Hagar's day they hate our Father's clan,  
Because with Ishmael she was driven forth  
To suffer in the wilderness, and now  
They gladly will make slave of Isaac's kin,  
Oh HO! It would be wrong to slay him now.  
*(They approach the pit. The cries of Joseph grow stronger.)*

JUDAH:

Hush thou thy weeping, what a leader thou!  
Thou waileth like a hurt and frightened maid.  
*(They draw him out of the pit. He thinks they will free him.)*

JOSEPH:

Oh, thank you for your kindness, brothers dear;  
I knew you would not leave me in the pit.

JUDAH:

And hast thou, then, been dreaming other dreams,  
If so, thy dream is false; thou art not free;  
We have a better plan for thee than that,  
Thou wilt be sold in Egypt, there perchance  
Thy gifts at ruling may be manifest,  
And Pharaoh offer thee his kingdom's crown.  
*(Caravan has been steadily approaching. Chanting grows stronger.)*

JUDAH:

What, ho! there, merchants, would ye make a bargain?  
We have a youth to sell; come, will ye buy?  
A fair price he will bring in Egypt's mart.

TORAH:

An Israelite! Ye Gods of Abraham!  
Old Isaac's grandson sold to be a slave!  
I would be glad to have him for myself;  
Nay, such a costly slave cannot be mine,  
But gold in plenty will I get in Egypt,  
For such a handsome lad, what price name ye?

JUDAH:

A splendid buy and so ye say yourself,  
What is he worth to thee? Make thou a bid.

TORAH:

Of silver twenty shekels, 'tis enough.

JUDAH:

Thou hast a bargain, but we will accept.  
*(The money exchanges hands, and Joseph is delivered to  
the merchants. In sorrow and yet with dignity he  
speaks.)*

JOSEPH:

Farewell, my brothers, I am crushed with shame  
And not with rage that ye should do this thing;  
My soul is filled with grief but not with fear;  
I am no longer just a timid lad,  
Threading my way across the desert's wilds,  
Starting at every shadow, sight and sound:  
I have come suddenly to manhood's hour,  
And as a man I tell ye now farewell,  
I did not know that I was hated so,  
As best I could I always tried to serve.

SIMEON:

Well, thou canst serve another master now.

JOSEPH:

I still shall dream wherever I may go,  
And where I am my Father's God will be,  
He yet may bring me to a place of power,  
These men who buy and sell me like a beast  
May find me buy them yet in Egypt's mart;  
And ye, whose mercy I have asked in vain,  
May cringe for mercy at my very feet:  
When that day comes and ye are in my power  
Then may your god have mercy on your souls.

TORAH:

Well spoken, how I like thy spirit lad;

Old Isaac's grandson with a heart like thine!  
*(The caravan passes slowly out of sight with the chanting  
of the camel driver's song fading away in the distance.  
Reuben comes to the pit and looks in and calls softly.)*

REUBEN:

Joseph, my lad, I have returned for thee;  
Thy brothers now have gone, we will escape  
And I will take thee to thy Father's home.  
Speak, Joseph, dost thou hear? 'Tis Reuben, lad:  
He doth not answer me. He is not here.  
Where did he go? Where shall I look for him?  
How can I tell my father he is gone?  
*(Judah and Simeon come up and speak.)*

JUDAH:

He is not there, my brother, he is gone,  
We sold him to a traveling merchant's band,  
He will be sold in Egypt as a slave.  
I now repent that we did treat him so,  
But we must face our father now! The coat  
Of many colors we have dipped in blood  
And we will say a beast hath slain his son.

SIMEON:

Yea, twenty shekels we received for him,  
His body sold, but not his voice nor eyes;  
That wailing voice from out the darkened pit  
Will always ring within mine ears, those eyes  
Will burn within my memory evermore.

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## ACT II—*The Dreamer Promoted*

ANNOUNCER: Several years have elapsed since Joseph was sold into Egyptian bondage. He was bought by Potiphar, the Captain of the King's Guard. Potiphar greatly liked Joseph and made him head steward of his entire household. Potiphar's wife became infatuated with Joseph, and when he resisted her advances

she trumped up a charge against him and caused him to be thrown in prison. Here he made the friendship of Pharaoh's butler, who promised to befriend Joseph when he got out of prison. This he forgot to do until Pharaoh had two troublesome dreams which reminded the butler of his gifted friend, the young Hebrew, who could interpret dreams. As our scene opens, Pharaoh has his soothsayers in his courtroom hoping that they will be able to interpret his dreams. They are using incantations to the accompaniment of music but without effect. Finally, in exasperation, Pharaoh speaks.

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PHARAOH:

Have done. It is enough of useless magic,  
Ye have had time sufficient and have failed.  
Magicians wise ye do pretend to be  
And yet know not the meaning of my dreams:  
What ho, my guard! Take these base men away,  
In deepest dungeon place them bound in chains,  
Give them but bread, and let them drink but water,  
They have fed heavily on choicest meats,  
Have drunk my richest wines to dizziness,  
Gross in their bodies, stupid in their minds,  
They are but little better than the beasts.  
Perhaps with poorer food and weaker drink  
Their muddled minds may yet be made to think:  
They failed to tell the meaning of my dreams,  
I'll leave them guess when they shall have release.  
(*Piteous cries are heard: "Have mercy, O have mercy, gracious king!"*)

BUTLER:

Oh, noble Pharaoh! Mightiest of the earth,  
Greatest of Egypt's monarchs, list I pray,  
Hear thou the story of thy worthless slave.  
The threat to wreak thy vengeance on the men  
Who were not able to interpret dreams  
Remindeth me of someone who is able.



For of a truth I know of such a one  
Who to my shame 'til now I had forgot.

PHARAOH:

Waste not my time in making vain excuse,  
If such a one thou knowest, tell his name.

BUTLER:

Thou knowest, king, that lately thou wert wroth,  
With thy chief baker and thine humble slave;  
Thy righteous wrath did doom us unto prison,  
And there to each of us did come a dream:  
Thy servant dreamed a vine was set before him,  
From which three branches sprang and brought forth  
grapes;  
He pressed a cup of wine and gave to thee:  
The baker dreamed three baskets full of meat  
Were on his head, the birds did eat the meat.

PHARAOH:

Who told thee of thy dreams and what they meant?  
Have they, as he explained them, come to pass?

BUTLER:

A wise young Hebrew, Joseph was his name,  
The baker's dreams foretokened of his death,  
The meats the birds devoured was his head;  
Within three days thou hadst the baker hanged.  
Mine honored place to bear the cup to thee  
Would be restored to me, and—here I am.  
I told this prophet I would speak to thee,  
Make mention of his gifts, but I forgot.

PHARAOH:

Make haste and bring him hither, even now;  
For I am greatly troubled by my dreams.  
I only pray no evil they portend;  
Beseech your gods for aid, that he may know  
More of life's wisdom than ye yet have shown,

If he be wise enough to tell my dreams  
And what they do portend, ye shall go free.

MAGICIAN:

Thanks, O most noble Lord, oh worthy king,  
To serve so wise and just a king as thou  
Would give us joy though we in prison languish.

*(There is the noise of approaching footsteps. Joseph is  
ushered into the presence of the king, pale and wan,  
but confident.)*

PHARAOH:

Who art thou, noble lad? For spite of marks  
Of prison pain, thou hast a wondrous face.

JOSEPH:

Men call me Joseph, I from Canaan come,  
The son of Jacob, head of Hebrew clan;  
My brethren hated me because I dreamed  
And told such dreams as seemed to praise myself.  
One day I came to where they grazed their flocks  
For they are shepherds, took them aught to eat;  
They threw me bound into a pit to die,  
Then, lest they stain their fingers in my blood,  
They sold me to a wand'ring merchant band,  
And I was brought enslaved to Egypt's mart.

PHARAOH:

Dreamer of dreams! I had almost forgot,  
At sight of thee the need I have of thee:  
Dreamer of dreams am I; dreams that disturb,  
I fear to learn and yet must know their meaning,  
Mayhap thou canst interpret them to me:  
Say, if thou canst, the secret of thy power.

JOSEPH:

What power I have, O king, is of my God;  
The founder of our clan was Abraham,  
He was a friend of God and knew his plans,  
And walked and talked with him; my Father, too,

Conversed with God and dreamed a wondrous dream  
In which he saw a ladder reaching heaven,  
And at its top the God of Heaven stood,  
And promised aid unto the end of days.  
My Father's God and mine will give me aid,  
Enable me to understand thy dreams.

PHARAOH:

And may thy God give wisdom unto thee,  
My wise men all have failed me utterly;  
And I am greatly troubled by my dreams;  
But only now I learned of thy great power,  
The butler told me of his prison dream,  
And how thou didst the baker's doom foretell;  
I hope that mine presage no evil fate.

JOSEPH:

According to the wisdom given me  
I will explain the meaning of thy dreams,  
Only relate to me what thou didst see,  
Mayhap my God to Pharaoh will give peace.

PHARAOH:

Then, listen, thou, while I my dreams relate:  
Behold, I stood upon the river bank,  
And saw from out its depths come seven kine,  
Fat-fleshed, and favoured well, and too there came  
Seven of other sort, ill-favoured, lean,  
Such as for badness never have I seen;  
The seven fat were by the lean devoured.  
I dreamed again and saw a stalk of corn,  
And on it seven ears of heavy grain;  
By seven blasted ears were they destroyed.

JOSEPH:

Oh king, thou hast two dreams, yet they are one:  
The fat-fleshed kine, the heavy ears of grain  
Were seven years of plenty in the land;  
The blasted ears of grain and lean-fleshed kine

Are years of famine which the crops destroy,  
Thou hadst the two that thou mayst not forget.

PHARAOH:

I am sore troubled. What dost thou advise?

JOSEPH:

Secure a man, if such a man be found,  
Discreet in wisdom, honest in his heart,  
Place him in charge of all the harvest fields,  
Cause him to hoard the precious plenteous grain,  
Put it in barns and save it 'gainst the hour  
When grim-faced famine stalks throughout the world:  
So shall the world be saved and thou be praised.

PHARAOH:

I pray thee, tell me where can such be found?  
Doth the gods' spirit dwell in such a one?  
Wisdom doth dwell in thee, but art thou good?  
For thou didst come to me from prison depths;  
What was the crime with which they had thee charged?  
Where hast thou served since coming to our land?

JOSEPH:

I will speak truth: I lived with Potiphar,  
The Captain of thy Guard—

PHARAOH:

I know the case,  
Thou needst tell no more, the Captain's wife  
Made charge against thee; it may please thee now  
To learn that even Potiphar, himself,  
Did not give credit to her monstrous lie;  
Else would the market place have seen thy head  
Raised on a pole to feed the carrion crows.

JOSEPH:

To know my master still hath faith in me  
Is gladsome news that maketh light my load.

PHARAOH:

But tell me, pray thee, why thou didst refuse;

A mistress' whims must always be obeyed,—  
To risk one's life, incur a woman's wrath,  
Is passing strange, some reason must thou have.

JOSEPH:

It is no thing for boasting on my part:  
My master trusted me with his affairs,  
And such a trust I could not well betray,  
And, too, my Mother taught me since a child  
That evil actions God would not approve.

PHARAOH:

The goodness of thy conduct doth excel  
The wondrous wisdom which thou dost display;  
I had not dreamed that in the whole wide world  
So much of faith and honor did abound;  
O'er all my household thou shalt be in rule,  
Thy word shalt be the law throughout the land,  
I shall be greater only on the throne,  
Take thou this ring which I have worn for years,  
It is thy symbol of authority;  
This golden chain will be around thy neck  
And clothe thee with becoming dignity;  
Fine vestures thou shalt wear and robes of state,  
Ride in the second chariot in the land,  
And where thou goest men shall bow to thee,  
Thou shalt control the conduct of the land.

JOSEPH:

It is a wondrous thing, that I, a slave,  
Should thus be honored by earth's greatest king;  
It may be 'tis a part of God's great plan  
To save the world from famine and from death,  
I do accept this as a sacred task:  
God of my fathers, give thy servant strength  
That he may serve the world in this great hour.

ACT III—*The Dreamer Triumphant*

ANNOUNCER: Years have passed away since Joseph was taken from prison and placed in charge of food conservation in Egypt. The seven years of plenty which he predicted were indeed full years. Through his wise planning the major portion of the bountiful harvests was conserved, and Egypt became the granary of the world. In the course of events, the ten older children of Jacob came to Egypt to buy food. Joseph recognized them and accused them of being spies. In their protest they revealed the fact that their father and Benjamin were still living. Joseph demanded that they bring Benjamin with them when they came again and kept Simeon as a surety of good faith. When they returned with Benjamin, Joseph caused his cup to be placed in Benjamin's sack as if the boy had stolen it, and after they had gone, he sent and had them arrested for theft. Our scene opens with Joseph's servant's telling of the return of the brothers under arrest. Joseph speaks.

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JOSEPH:

And didst thou do as I commanded thee?

AMNAH:

I did, most noble Lord, in every way;  
The Hebrew shepherds I did overtake,  
I charged them with the stealing of thy cup,  
And when I searched the sacks the cup was found  
In the young lad's; they call him Benjamin:  
Stricken with grief they were and cried aloud,  
Palsied with fear they stand without the door.

JOSEPH:

Well done, good Amnah, send them in to me.

AMNAH:

It shall be done, my Lord; lo, here they come;  
Young Benjamin, he seemeth not a thief;  
I crave my master's pardon, no offense,  
And yet he looketh almost like to thee,  
When first I happily became thy slave,

JUDAH:

I did become a surety for the lad,  
I told my Father he might slay my sons  
If I returned without his favorite son;  
I cannot face my Father in this loss,  
Keep thou thy servant, send our brother back,  
E'en though I see my precious boys no more.  
On bended knee I pray thee, send him back,  
And I will gladly serve thee evermore.

JOSEPH:

Let all the servants leave the palace hall:  
My brothers, I am Joseph, fear ye not:  
And doth my aged Father really live? (*Sobs*)  
So this is Benjamin, my little brother;  
Come near me, brothers, it is really I,  
Your brother, Joseph, whom ye sold in bondage.

SIMEON:

Yea, it is really he, his eyes still shine  
As in those days he told us of his dreams;  
And I have seen those eyes through all the years  
And heard the wailing of thy piteous voice  
That called for mercy from that dreadful pit:  
That other voice I do remember, too;  
The voice that promised some day thou wouldst rule,  
That God might then have mercy on our souls;  
God's wrath and not his mercy now is ours,  
Take thou thy vengeance, vent thy rage on us,  
For conscience telleth us what we deserve.

JOSEPH:

Nay, Simeon, say not so; I am not grieved  
Nor am I angry at thy far-off deed;  
I have forgiven you, long, long, ago:  
'Twas God that sent me hither to this land  
That I might save its food and save the world.

SIMEON:

And doth the famine threaten all the world?

JOSEPH:

The fearful famine hath but just begun.  
Had it not been for Pharaoh's warning dream  
And had not God made plain to me its meaning  
The world would perish through the lack of food.

REUBEN:

Dear Lad, I always knew that thou, not I  
Deserved authority to rule the clan,  
And I am happy that this fortune came.

JOSEPH:

Thou mayst thank God for bringing it to pass;  
But haste thee to my Father with the news;  
Bring him and all thy families back with thee,  
Here shall ye dwell in peace and happiness.  
I had the cup placed in my brother's sack  
To see if to your Father ye were true,  
And ye have proven men of noble hearts  
Of whom a ruler may be justly proud.

SIMEON:

Forgiven! Now I know how God must love.

CURTAIN



V

# *The Mission of Moses*

## *Israel Receives the Law*

### PERSONS

MOSES	JOSHUA
JOCHEBED, <i>his mother</i>	PHARAOH, <i>King of Egypt</i>
MIRIAM, <i>his sister</i>	GUARDS
AARON, <i>his brother</i>	PEOPLE

### PLACES

- ACT I. *The Home of Moses' Mother*  
 ACT II. *Palace of the Pharaohs, Forty Years Later*  
 ACT III. *Near Mt. Sinai, a Few Months Later*

### PROPERTIES

<i>Benches or stools</i>	<i>Drums and sheet iron for thunder</i>
<i>Throne chair</i>	<i>Thin flat rock for tables of stone</i>
<i>Spears for guards</i>	<i>Crown for king</i>
<i>Sword for Joshua</i>	

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### ACT I—*The Flight to Midian*

ANNOUNCER: Several centuries have passed since Abraham became the father of the Hebrew people. Isaac and Jacob succeeded him in the patriarchal order. Joseph, the favorite son of Jacob, was sold into Egyptian bondage and speedily became a favorite at court. He sent back to Canaan for his family, and they were established in Egypt. The Hebrews increased in numbers, wealth, and power, until the Egyptians grew afraid of them. The Israelites were thrown into slavery where hard tasks were imposed upon them. Still they thrived until the King ordered the male children slain in order to stop the increase of the people.

Through the cleverness of his mother, Moses was spared and became the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. His mother was secured as his nurse and gave him his early training. When he grew to manhood, he was so interested in his people that he slew an Egyptian who was oppressing them. The next day he interfered with two of his quarreling countrymen who resented his action and threatened his exposure.

Our first scene opens in the home of Moses' mother, who has now grown old and gray. Moses and Miriam, his sister, are with their mother awaiting the return of Aaron, who is out trying to discover how the people feel toward Moses. As the scene begins, Aaron enters. Moses addresses him.

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MOSES:

Thou hast returned at last: what hast thou learned?

AARON:

An understone of discontent's abroad.  
A murmur passeth through the gathering groups,  
Who seemingly discuss thee and thy deed  
In hostile terms. Whenever I approach  
They seem to know me and they whisper low;  
I hear they threaten to disclose the act  
To Pharaoh.

MOSES:

Ungrateful wretched beasts,  
Because I knew they were my flesh and blood,  
Their suffering 'roused my deepest sympathy.  
Oft of their fate I've spoken to the king,  
Protested 'gainst the burdens which they bear,  
Until with anger and suspicion filled,  
My actions and my words he doth resent.  
Still, since I knew injustice gross was done,  
My heart went out unto my kinsmen slaves,  
And when I saw their senseless suffering,  
Saw Pharaoh's brutes strike them with fiendish blows,  
My blood ran hot, I struck the Egyptian down,

Defended them from punishment unjust,  
And this the gratitude the base slaves feel.

MIRIAM:

Tell us, my brother, why they turned on thee.

MOSES:

Today these very Hebrews fell to blows,  
Quarreling and bickering most bitterly;  
I shamed them and reproved them 'til one said:  
"So, thou wilt slay today as yesterday?"  
"Do murder as thou didst to Pharaoh's guard?"  
Perhaps I showed uneasiness and fear,  
At once his manner changed to insolence,  
He openly defied and challenged me.  
This is the gratitude which I receive  
For favors done them at the court: the beasts!

JOCHEBED:

Speak not so harshly of thy kin, my son;  
Remember that the selfsame blood doth run  
Within their veins as courseth in thine own.

AARON:

Methinks, my mother, his complaint is just;  
These hostile Hebrews merit his contempt;  
Not those alone whom rightly he reproved,  
But countless others, sulk and sneer enraged;  
And hint that Moses worketh selfishly;  
Suggest he striveth mastery to gain  
O'er Israelites and land of Egypt, too.  
They threaten to expose him to the king  
Before he get the throne within his grasp  
And rule them: sooner would they governed be  
By Pharaoh whom within their souls they hate,  
Than have their kith and kin rule over them.

MOSES:

Ah woe is me! It was an evil day  
When, stirred with sympathy, I did allow

My heart to sway my judgment, cause me go  
Before the king and plead their worthless cause.

MIRIAM:

How other couldst thou do when all thy life  
Thou hast been taught that they were kin to thee?

MOSES:

Woe upon woe, for even worse the day  
When of this cursed kinship I was told.

JOCHEBED:

Remember, son, thou owest much to God,  
Who claimeth these thy people as his own:  
*Thy life was forfeit; had not providence*  
Directed thine escape, thou long ago  
Would lie asleep among the dreamless shades;  
Dead at the very moment of thy birth.

MOSES:

Perhaps, my mother, it had been as well.  
Then had I not been filled with high desires;  
Desired to rule, to sway, to be a king:  
And yet be cursed with kinship to the slaves  
Who hate and curse and 'gainst me turn in spite.  
Had they but waited, but been satisfied  
To bear their burdens for a few years more,  
I might have gained the crown, in power secure,  
Their freedom granted them, and they with us  
In plenty and in power might have lived.

JOCHEBED:

My son, God moveth in mysterious ways  
To bring about his plans; a royal prince  
Could never know the need of suffering slaves.  
Hadst thou succeeded to great Egypt's throne,  
Sat with a diadem upon thy brow,  
Then mightst thou have forgotten that the god  
Of all thy fathers had a plan for thee,  
A destiny, far-reaching, to fulfill.

MOSES:

A destiny, far-reaching, to fulfill?  
Thou speakest but in riddles, make it plain.

JOCHEBED:

Dost think that such mysterious providence  
As that which saved thy life is all for naught?  
Nay, nay, my son, thy God hath need of thee;  
He calleth and thine heart hath heard the call.  
The day the ruffian struck that suffering slave  
He struck the manacles from off thy soul,  
And set thee free thy tortured kin to aid.  
The blood that weltered from the gaping wound  
Was as the blood that flowed within thy veins,  
Thine own blood surged to meet its mute appeal,  
Our nation's freedom in that hour began;  
From thence thy fate doth with thy people's blend  
And thou must lead them from this cursed land.

AARON:

Methinks my brother's is the better way;  
The throne of Egypt, what a mighty throne!  
What wealth, what power, what pleasure is the right  
Of him who sitteth on that throne as king!  
Such mirth and music fill the palace halls  
That even we, who have no share within,  
Must know how great the charm of pleasure is:  
Its coffers choke with gorge of golden wealth,  
The trembling nations bring their tribute thither,  
The feathers, ointment, gold and precious gems:  
Their gorgeous galleys sweep the farthest seas  
And gather gold throughout the royal realm;  
Their armies are the mightiest of the world.  
This wealth, this pleasure, power would all be his,  
My brother's, had he chosen to be king  
Rather than cast his lot with hapless slaves.  
How great the disappointment that is his!

JOCHEBED:

A greater throne than that of Egypt's king  
Doth make demand upon his service now;  
Mine heart doth tell me that 'twere better far  
My son should never sit on Pharaoh's throne;  
The noise of mirth and din of revelry  
Might drown the call of God within his ears,  
The glare of gold and pride of place and power,  
Benumb his heart against his people's needs.

MOSES:

Dost thou still feel, my mother, that thy God  
Hath need of me to aid, espouse his cause?

JOCHEBED:

Why else the providence that saved thee, son?

MOSES:

Mayhap thou'rt right, my mother, tell again  
The tale thou toldst me when but a child;  
My mood tonight may cause me to attend  
More closely than hath been my wont of late.

JOCHEBED:

'Twas many years ago that Joseph came  
A tender youth, enslaved in Egypt's land;  
In time he grew in favor at the court,  
Became a mighty ruler of the realm  
And through God's providence relieved the world  
When famine threatened sore—

MOSES (*interrupting*):

Yes, I know,  
That story thou hast told me oft before;  
Tell me the part that doth relate to me.

JOCHEBED:

Thy people spread in number and in force  
Until the royal throne was sore afraid;  
To quell their power the Hebrews were enslaved,  
Compelled to labor hard at grievous tasks:

At last the king, in terror, gave command  
That every male should be destroyed at birth;  
What terror filled my heart those anxious days,  
When in expectancy I 'waited thee!  
And when at last they laid thee in mine arms,  
I prayed in agony to save thy life;  
Thy birth was kept a secret for a while,  
But soon thou wert too large to keep concealed;  
A little ark of rushes we contrived,  
Bedaubed it tight with pitch, placed thee within,  
And hid it where the princess came to bathe:  
She came and saw thee and thine infant smile  
Beguiled her heart, she took thee to her breast,  
And bathed thy baby cheeks in gladsome tears;  
Spared thee and claimed thee as her very own.

MIRIAM:

I still remember how I anxious watched  
Upon the bank, and when the princess came,  
Saw thee and claimed thee, I did offer make  
To fetch a nurse from out the Hebrew camp:  
The princess gave consent and so I came  
To find thy mother, bid her nurse her child.

JOCHEBED:

A thoughtful trick and clever; so my son,  
We brought thee to thy father's house and there  
Thy childhood days were spent within our care;  
There thou wast taught the story of thy clan,  
How to thy fathers God did speak of yore,  
And of his promise of the years to come.  
When at the proper age thou didst arrive,  
We took thee to the palace to be trained.  
God must have needed thee for some good cause,  
To spread about thee his protecting wings.

MOSES:

Mother, my love for thee will never fail:

And yet tonight I feel as if a curse,  
And not a blessing, thou didst bring to me:  
Had I not seen the splendor of that throne,  
Heard the mad music, felt the thrill of power,  
My soul had been content. To lead the van  
Of Pharaoh's armed hosts, to know the touch  
Of magic gold and mingle with the great—  
I can but feel through all the coming years  
A discontent that will not brook these slaves.

JOHEBED:

A discontent! Thank God thou'rt not content;  
This discontent will drive thee to the wilds  
Of Midian's desert there to find thy God:  
List to his voice as Abram did of yore;  
Learn there the mission which thou must fulfill.  
Thou there wilt learn that those thou callest slaves  
Are children of the mighty God of earth;  
And 'tis their destiny to sway the world.  
Thou, then, shalt rule a realm of righteousness;  
A kingdom not of force and lust and gold,  
Where might holds sway, but governed by the right:  
Our father's god will lay his hand on thee,  
Send thee to lead thy children from this land  
To that which he hath promised Abraham,  
Establish there the kingdom of our God.  
Go, seek the desert wilds and learn of him.

MOSES:

The kingdom of our God! Perhaps thou'rt right,  
I feel tonight an urge both strong and strange;  
If he should call me I will do his will.

JOHEBED:

And he will surely call; long years may go  
Before he gives the call, yet come it will:  
My frame is growing feeble and my brow  
Gray-streaked and wrinkled speaks of coming age;



I shall not stay to bid thee welcome home,  
Yet when thou dost return to do his will,  
Within the grave contented I shall lie,  
Content to see our fathers' dream fulfilled.  
Go, now, my son before my old heart break,  
Go, and God lead thee to thy glorious fate.

MOSES:

Farewell, I go, I shall await the call.

*(Music.)*

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## ACT II—*The Challenge to the Crown*

ANNOUNCER: More than two score years have passed. In the Midianite desert Moses has communed with nature and with nature's God and has returned with the mission of setting the Israelites free. Nine plagues have been sent in rapid succession upon the Egyptians. At times Pharaoh relented temporarily, but again hardened his heart and refused to let the people go. It is the night of the Passover, and all through Egypt the Hebrews are planning to make their departure. Moses is having a last interview with Pharaoh before the tenth plague falls. As the scene opens, Moses is standing before Pharaoh, who is seated upon his throne. He speaks to Moses angrily.

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PHARAOH:

How now, thou slave, what dost thou here again?

MOSES:

I come to bring to thee again, O king,  
And to thy fated people an escape  
From doom more dire than ever threatened yet  
The welfare of a race—

PHARAOH (*laughing nervously and yet scornfully*):

To bring to me!

To hear thee one would think thou wert the king,  
And I a desert beggar; why should I,

Of all this realm the ruler, list to thee?  
I marvel that my patience hath no end:  
Why should I further brook thine impudence?  
(Claps his hands and guards appear)  
What, ho! my guards, stand forth! This beggar seize!  
Speak now thou slave and tell me if thou canst  
Why I the order should not give to these  
To take thine head from off thy filthy frame;  
Feed thy foul carcass to the carrion crows?

MOSES:

Why not, indeed, O king! Hast thou forgot  
The plagues, those signs and wonders that were sent?

PHARAOH:

The plagues! And thinkest thou that I have wit  
So small that credit I would give to thee  
For sending these on Egypt? Had I thought  
That thou didst bring the least of evil here,  
Then with thy life the payment thou wouldst make.  
Perhaps thy folly still would have me think  
Some god did send thee on this silly task:  
Thou dost annoy and vex, and yet amuse;  
Recount again thy call, I might believe.

MOSES:

A god did send me, faithless, scornful king;  
A god more potent than the gods of Nile,  
Isis, Osiris, Apis and the rest:  
Thou knowest in thine heart that this is true.  
I need not tell thee of my call again;  
For thou that call wilt nevermore forget;  
But lest thou think my faith doth wane and fail,  
I will recount for thee that scene again:  
'Twas midnight in the Midian desert wilds,  
No light was seen save where the silent glow  
Of canopy, star-studded, stretched above;

A sudden fire appeared, mysterious, strange;  
Fear seized me and I shrank in dread away;  
Then courage came; at last I dared to gaze,  
To crawl and creep to where a flaming bush  
Blazed with a fire that burned nor yet consumed;  
Fired with no earthly flame—a fire with God;  
And from that flame a strange, mysterious voice,  
Filling my heart with terror, yet with hope,  
Commanding: "Take thy shoes from off thy feet,  
For where thou standest, that is holy ground."

PHARAOH (*laughing again scornfully*):

A voice! No doubt thy god was calling thee.

MOSES:

Yea, 'twas my God, God of my people, too;  
Thus spake his voice: "I am the Lord, thy God;  
The god of Abraham and all thy sires;  
My people's sore afflictions I have seen,  
And I am come to bring to them relief:  
I know the sorrows which have seared their souls,  
And with my might I will deliver them.  
They shall be led unto a goodly land  
Where milk and honey in abundance flow."

PHARAOH:

What goodly land is this? Where lies this land?  
Surely could such a realm on earth be found  
My soldiers would have seized it for the crown;  
Where would a slave discover such a land?

MOSES:

This goodly land was promised years ago,  
To Abraham, our father, and his sons;  
The promise God hath made again to me,  
Commissioned me to lead my people forth:  
Oft have I made request of thee, O king,

That they might go to their inheritance;  
Received from thee but cruelty and sneers.

PHARAOH:

And who art thou, that thou dost bold presume  
To make demand of me?

MOSES:

I asked the Voice  
That question: what, I asked, shall I reply  
When man shall say: Who sent thee to this task?

PHARAOH:

A question of importance! The reply?

MOSES:

The Voice said: Tell them that the great I Am  
Hath sent thee.

PHARAOH:

Nonsense, 'tis enough;  
Hence to the dungeon, there await thy death.

MOSES:

Hast thou forgotten, Pharaoh, all the signs  
Jehovah sent to prove his right and power?

PHARAOH:

Signs? But a bit of magic thou didst work,  
Confounding my magicians in their craft.

MOSES:

I meant not magic, Pharaoh, but the plagues.  
Hast thou forgotten that thy sacred Nile  
Its waters turned to blood and sent forth stench,  
Thy gods, the crocodiles, helpless to heal?  
Dost not remember when the filthy frogs  
Leaped in the ovens, filled each public place  
And died in heaps? Did lice and flies and boils,  
Darkness and storm that crushed the growing crops,  
The swarms of locusts laying bare the fields,

The plague of murrain grieving man and beast;  
Did these so lightly weigh upon thy mind  
That thou so soon forgettest?

PHARAOH:

All thy plagues  
Can cast no fear in Egypt's monarch's mind;  
I fear no desert god; I will defy  
Thee and thy God as I have done before:  
My patience is exhausted; get thee hence!

MOSES:

Once more I warn thee; still another plague,  
More fearful to thy people and thyself  
Than all thou hast experienced yet will come:  
Unless thou now shalt set my people free,  
Ere midnight there shall fall on all the land,  
Disaster filled with sorrow, grief and pain,  
Worse than all woes that thou hast known before.

PHARAOH:

Once more I do defy thee and thy god;  
Do thou thy worst! What trouble threateneth us?  
(*Quartet begins humming chorus of "Go Down Moses."*  
*Hums it through and sings first stanza in medium*  
*voice. They continue the song on to end, gradually in-*  
*creasing until they sing in full volume.)*

MOSES:

Disaster that shall cause through all thy land,  
A cry of grief and woe to pierce the skies;  
E'en now Death's angel hovereth o'er the Nile,  
Above thy palace spreadeth now his wings,  
Thy domain's doom to strike with bloody sword:  
In every home the first-born son shall die.

PHARAOH:

And dost thou think to frighten Egypt's king,

With threat of doom that hangeth o'er the land?  
Thou blustering varlet, tell me if thou canst,  
The fate of thine own kin in such an hour;  
How shall they shun the angel's threatening sword?

MOSES:

On every lintel there is sprinkled blood,  
A sign unto death's angel that within  
There worship those who love Jehovah's name;  
A blessing he will breathe and not a curse;  
Peace shall abide within: a hasty feast  
They now partake of, ready for the word  
That shall release them, bid them on their way;  
Dost thou not hear the music of their praise?

PHARAOH (*again clapping his hands and addressing slave*):

It is enough, ho, slave! call in the guard  
Bid thou the captain that he place his troops  
In double file around the palace wall;  
Patrol each quarter of the city. (*They leave.*) Now  
Thou hast our challenge, let the angel come!  
The troops of Pharaoh can protect his throne.  
(*A strange weird wailing comes faintly at first and then increases in intensity. Hebrew song blends with it.*)

PHARAOH:

What in the name of all our gods is that?

MOSES:

The angel, e'en now he hovers near,  
Waiting to strike unless thou dost relent.

PHARAOH (*again clapping his hands and summoning guard*):

Bid thou the captain that he send his troops  
Among the Hebrews, ordering them to slay,  
And put an end unto their senseless song:  
They soon shall learn that I am ruler here.  
(*As guard turns to go, a cry bursts forth on every side. All listen in terror. A blood curdling shriek comes from a near-by room in the palace. A slave bursts in crying.*)

SLAVE:

The prince, O king, the prince, the little prince!

PHARAOH:

Out with it slave, the prince, what aileth him?

SLAVE:

The prince is dead; he died most suddenly.

PHARAOH (*in anger yet in grief*):

Go, Moses, take thy people from the land;

Go quickly, let me see thy face no more!

MOSES:

Well spoken, I will see thy face no more.

(*Music of weird sort as curtain falls.*)

---

### ACT III—*The Giving of the Law*

ANNOUNCER: Months have passed since the children of Israel were allowed to leave Egypt. They are camped a few miles away from Mount Sinai, and Moses, leaving the camp in the care of Aaron, has gone with Joshua to the mountain top where he received the Ten Commandments written upon tables of stone. As he and Joshua near the camp upon their return, they hear the noise of revelry and halt to discuss the cause.

---

JOSHUA:

It soundeth plainer now, there is the cry

Not of a few, but of a multitude.

MOSES:

I cannot think of cause for all the noise;

This din and turmoil quite bewilder me.

JOSHUA:

It is a sound of war within the camp.

MOSES:

The shout thou hearest cometh not from those

That strive for mastery or for mercy plead;  
*(They pause a few seconds as the sound of music comes.)*  
It is the sound of singing that I hear.  
Make haste, I fear some mischief is abroad.  
*(They plod along while the sound of music and of revelry increases.)*

JOSHUA:

They sing and dance as tho they did surround  
Some object which in worship they adore;  
What can that object be?

MOSES:

It is a calf,  
A golden calf, in Apis' image made;  
They have returned to base idolatry.  
*(Rushes indignantly forward and cries loudly)*  
Stay, stop that wicked worship, in the name  
Of Israel's god, the great Jehovah, cease!  
*(The multitude fall away in the background while Aaron comes forward.)*  
O people steeped in sin and wickedness,  
Idolators, what monstrous thing is this?  
Aaron, the camp was left in thy command,  
Speak, thou, how did this evil thing occur?

AARON:

The people thought thee dead—

MOSES:

They thought me dead!  
Is that just reason for idolatry?  
What if I die, Jehovah is not dead;  
Right hath not perished, sin is not enthroned!

AARON:

Let not the anger of my lord wax hot;  
Thou knowest of this people's wicked ways,  
On doing evil they are constant set.



MOSES:

Thou wert the leader, wherefore, then, didst thou  
Prevent them not from doing such a thing?

AARON:

I could not keep them from this shameful deed;  
They grew impatient when my lord delayed  
His coming from the mount: there was no sign—

MOSES (*interrupting*):

No sign! and did they need a further sign  
To show Jehovah's presence and his power?  
Have they forgotten all the plagues so soon?  
So soon forgot the waters of the sea  
That stood in walls that they might pass dry-shod,  
And rolled upon their foes until they drowned?  
Did manna from the heavens fall in vain?  
The dry and dusty rocks pour forth their floods  
To quench the thirst of fainting herd and men?  
And do they not remember how, by day,  
The cloudy pillar shielded from the sun;  
And in the night the shield of fire remained  
To frighten off their foes, protect their camp?

AARON:

My lord, they wished a god that all could see;  
They brought their gold and bade me make a god;  
I cast the gold within the flame of fire,  
Out came this calf—behold they worship him,  
As one that led them up from Egypt's land.

MOSES:

As they have sinned, so shall they reap reward:  
Who is on God's side; let them come to me.

VOICES (*in concert*):

We are his friends, him only will we serve.

(*Noise of advancing men, stir of excitement.*)

MOSES:

Tear down the calf, and burn it in the fire  
*(Shouts of Aye! Aye! Aye! Aye!)*  
Grind it to powder, strew it in their drink,  
That they may taste the bitterness of sin;  
Gird on your swords and go throughout the camp;  
Kill! Let no guilty one escape alive.  
These tablets which contain Jehovah's law,  
This people is unworthy to receive;  
The tablets I will break in pieces, too.  
*(Casts them noisily to the ground and sinks sobbing, while  
there is a sound of terror and confusion in the dis-  
tance.)*  
*(Music to indicate an interlude.)*

ANNOUNCER: And so it came to pass that Moses returned to the mountain and interceded with God for his people and asked that the law be given him again. *(As the scene opens, there is the noise of a low rumble of thunder, a weird sigh, and wail to indicate mystery.)*

MOSES:

Yea, they have failed again, O lord, my God;  
Once more thy people have committed sin;  
*(Sound of thunder and storm as background)*  
Broken and spurned are those, thy holy laws;  
E'en as I bore the laws, engraved in stone,  
Back to the camp, they made them gods of gold;  
Death, death alone they merit, righteous God:  
Yet, God of mercy, mercy to them show;  
*(Thunder continues to increase.)*  
Forgive their sin, Jehovah, if thou wilt:  
If thou wilt not forgive, then from thy book,  
The book of thy remembrance, blot my name!  
*(Thunder increases.)*  
There is but noise of thunder, and the dark,

Dense darkness, O Jehovah, send the light.

*(Heavier thunder)*

Speak thou in tones of pity, not reproof;

Another message for thy people give.

*(Another fearful crash of thunder)*

The light! The light! Praise be to God, the light!

*(As thunder dies away, a Voice is heard calling as from a great distance. Slowly, distinctly, it comes: "I—am—the—Lord—thy—God—that—brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image—" The voice trails away into silence, and there is a background of soft music.)*

CURTAIN

# VI

## *Samson and Delilah*

### PERSONS

SAMSON, <i>a judge in Israel</i>	DELILAH, <i>his sweetheart</i>
MANOAH, <i>his father</i>	GANNA, <i>Delilah's mother</i>
TAMAR, <i>his mother</i>	ZEMEAH, <i>a Philistine captain</i>

### PLACES

ACT I.	<i>The Home of Samson's Parents in Zorah</i>
ACT II.	<i>The Home of Delilah in the Vale of Sorek</i>
ACT III.	Scene 1. <i>The Vicinity of Samson's Prison</i>
	Scene 2. <i>The Dungeon in the Prison</i>
	Scene 3. <i>The Temple of Dagon</i>

### PROPERTIES

<i>Benches and stools</i>	<i>Ropes</i>
<i>Shears</i>	<i>Torches</i>
<i>Rings and bracelets for Delilah</i>	<i>Iron needle</i>

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### ACT I—*The Conflict*

ANNOUNCER: Centuries have passed since Moses freed his people from Egyptian bondage. He was succeeded by Joshua, who conquered the Promised Land. After Joshua's death, judges ruled over the people. At the time the story opens, the Philistines had conquered the Israelites and were oppressing them until a youthful giant, named Samson, arose who resented and resisted their cruelties. He became so self-confident that he underwent useless risks as he visited their women in the very villages of the enemy. As the scene opens, Manoah, Samson's father, is discussing his son with the boy's mother, Tamar.

He burned the fields of those our overlords  
And they in turn will vent their spite on us.  
Still, as if once betrayed were not enough,  
He visiteth in Gaza, now again  
Consorteth with a woman of their land.  
Why should he always seek his pleasure there?

TAMAR:

He is of age and knoweth his desires,  
If thou wouldst know, inquire of our son.

MANOAH:

Inquire of him? He never is at home;  
And when at last he cometh, he doth fret,  
And treat my questions with a base contempt.

TAMAR:

He is a judge in Israel, if he choose  
To make no answer, then that right is his.

MANOAH:

A judge in Israel! But no judge of mine;  
I am his father, and I have my rights.

TAMAR:

Rather than angry, then thou shouldst be proud  
That God hath made thee father of such strength.

MANOAH:

Thou speakest well, and I am very glad  
That with that strength he doth his people help:  
But why to Gaza doth he constant go?  
What doth he find that causeth him to stay?

TAMAR:

His pleasure—Gaza's lovely maids, of course;  
Perhaps 'tis well for if he visit them  
He spareth Israel's maidens; right or wrong  
'Tis sadly true that youth must have its fling.

MANOAH:

Its fling! And he, our son, a Nazarite;

'Tis time he wed and settled down at home;  
Israel hath maidens, let him marry here.

TAMAR:

But he is young—

MANOAH:

Yea, young, but old enough  
To use some judgment; he must play with fire.

TAMAR:

To take great risks, that is the joy of youth;  
Thou art too righteous, be not so severe;  
Deal gently with our lad, so strong and brave;  
Break not his spirit or his strength may flee.  
He cometh now, pray do not have a quarrel.  
(*Noise is heard. Samson enters. Manoah speaks.*)

MANOAH:

At last thou comest, what has thou to say  
About the trouble which thou causeth us?  
We cannot meet our enemies in fight,  
Why dost thou constant tease and anger them?  
Or dost thou single-handed think to win?

SAMSON:

Perhaps I might. When have I ever failed?

MANOAH:

Cease troubling them. Their fields thou hast destroyed;  
Their crops hast burned to stubble, and their homes  
Despoiled as thou in lust their women shared;  
Dost think that they will ever be content?

SAMSON:

And if I wrong them, have I not just cause?  
Did not they steal my very wife from me?

MANOAH:

Thy wife! Perhaps thy woman thou dost mean;  
Thou hadst no right to take her to thyself;  
Thou wert well rid of her. Thou stubborn ox,

Dumb as an ass, deaf to thy father's pleas;  
She made a fool of thee and then she left.

SAMSON:

Are things not better since I punished them?  
Once men by wine-press hid to thresh their wheat,  
And walked through by-ways 'stead of beaten roads;  
Today we go in safety where we will.  
*(Noise is heard outside as Philistine captain comes.)*  
Zemeah cometh, leader of those swine;  
Thou dog, uncircumcised, what dost thou here?

ZEMEAH:

I come to offer thee a truce of peace.  
*(Awaits reply but receives none; continues)*  
We did not know the woman was thy wife;  
Her father tricked thee, not with our consent.  
*(Again waits but receives no answer; continues again)*  
Dost thou not hear me? We would make amends,  
Repay thy loss, restore thy wife again,  
If thou dost wish her; punishment will mete  
To those who did thee wrong.

SAMSON:

And why tell this?

ZEMEAH:

To do thee justice, bring about a truce;  
I and my people would have peace with thee.

SAMSON:

'Twixt you and me no peace can ever come.

ZEMEAH:

Thou hast done spite enough and had revenge;  
The foxes thou didst loose to burn our fields.

SAMSON:

Not thine, Zemeah, all those fields were ours,  
'Til thou didst steal them with thy thieving throng.

ZEMEAH:

We did not steal, we captured them in war.

SAMSON:

And I repeat that ye did steal them, swine;  
Like lice and fleas on dogs ye vex us sore;  
Ye are the locusts that devour our crops;  
The greedy mice that eat the garnered grain;  
The worms that all our vineyards do despoil;  
Ye have destroyed the hope in every heart,  
Nor shall peace come 'til ye have been destroyed.

ZEMEAH:

And art thou sure that thou hast named the cause  
Of all thy discontent? Is it thy fields  
That we have stolen that doth cause thy hate?  
Or doth, perhaps, an envy fill thy heart  
For fear that fair Delilah might be lost?  
Perhaps she may not yet become thy wife,  
Or, like the other, prove to be untrue.  
A woman yet will bring thee to thy doom.

SAMSON (*laughing*):

The cause of all thy rancor thou dost show;  
Thou yet mayst win a battle over me,  
But she is mine, nor ever can be thine.

ZEMEAH:

'Tis useless further words to waste with thee,  
Some day our gods will over thine prevail;  
In Dagon's temple thou wilt be enchained.

SAMSON:

Thy heathen temple I will yet destroy.  
(*Captain leaves.*)

MANOAH:

My son, why wilt thou never be discreet?  
Thou hast but added insult to their hurt.  
(*Manoah leaves.*)

TAMAR:

Thy Father doth not understand thee, Son;  
Thou dost not understand thyself nor him.



Nor dost thou seem to understand the law  
That doth command to strangers to be kind.

SAMSON:

Strangers? Perhaps, but these are enemies,  
Oppressing as they did in Egypt's land.

TAMAR:

Mayhap, my son, thou canst a leader be  
As once was Moses in the long ago.

SAMSON:

I glad would free them could it only be.

TAMAR:

Who knoweth but thou mayst, dost thou not know  
An angel came to tell us of thy birth?

SAMSON:

My father saith it was a fairy tale.

TAMAR:

Then, I reply, thy father doth not know.

SAMSON:

But, mother, surely thou canst scarce believe  
That God doth send his angels now as then  
And speak in burning bushes as of yore.

TAMAR:

If thou dost doubt, then all mine hopes are vain;  
Go, cut thine hair, there is thy source of strength;  
No shears have touched it, thou thyself canst see;  
Thou then wilt be as weak as any man.

SAMSON:

Mother, thou meanest that my source of strength  
Doth lie within my hair, is sent by God?

TAMAR:

And didst thou think, my son, that of thyself  
Such strength could come as gave thee victory  
O'er all thy foes? But God could furnish that.

SAMSON:

Mother, sayst thou I am ordained of God?

TAMAR:

And may he find thee faithful to the trust.

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ACT II—*The Betrayal*

ANNOUNCER: Our next scene takes place in the house of Delilah in the Vale of Sorek. Delilah is in her room preparing to receive Samson. As the scene opens, Ganna, her mother, comes in and surprises Delilah, who is talking to herself.

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DELILAH:

Make haste and come, my loved one, for the night  
Doth drag so slow along without thy smile;  
Come swiftly, let us take our fill of love,  
Until the day break and the shadows flee.

GANNA:

And so thou dost expect a lover! Whom?

DELILAH:

And if I do, thou needst not ask me whom;  
Only one man is worth my waiting for:  
But why ask me? Go ask thy filthy friends,  
List to their gossip; heed their spiteful lies;  
For that thou doest all the livelong day.

GANNA:

I have been working here and begging there,  
To get the bread to feed our hungry brood.  
If he doth love thee and thou lovest him  
Why then not ask his aid that we may live  
In more than pinching hunger? Or perhaps  
Thou fearest, if thou ask, to lose his love.

DELILAH:

To lose his love? Ah, mother, never fear;  
For he hath known my love, and may again,  
All other women hath he left for me.

GANNA:

And he will leave thee as he hath the rest,  
When he hath tired of thee; thou still art new  
And like a strange toy thou dost interest him;  
He will discard thee when no longer strange.

DELILAH:

'Tis not my strangeness that attracteth him,  
He loveth me and telleth me his hopes,  
His plans, his dreams, yea, of his very God.

GANNA:

He loveth thee? He offereth thee what proof?

DELILAH:

Love needeth not a proof, 'tis its own pledge.

GANNA:

Thou art a foolish child to trust a man,  
Why not discover if he love or not?

DELILAH:

How can I know if he doth truly love?

GANNA:

Ask him to tell thee what his secret is.

DELILAH:

Mother, thou dost arouse me, not to doubt,  
But to discover what his secret is.

GANNA:

His secret is the secret of his strength,  
Our warriors conquer every other foe  
Yet fail before him, pitiful and weak,  
Like leaves in windstorm, stubble in the flame,  
Like little children damming up a stream  
With fistfuls of thin mud. But do not ask  
Thy lover's secret. He would never tell;  
And thou wouldst only have a quarrel with him:  
Keep thou his friendship, have thy fill of love,  
E'en though thy people perish at his hands.

He cometh now; nay, 'tis Zemeah cometh.  
(*Captain enters. Ganna continues.*)  
This foolish child doth think she is in love  
With Samson, bitterest foe of all our land;  
The man who slew her kin and burnt our fields,  
Who laugheth in derision at our gods.  
And yet methinks he loveth not the child.  
Else would he tell the secret of his strength.

ZEMEAH:

He doth but use her for his selfish lust;  
Twice hath the question of his strength been raised,  
Twice tho he promised hath he failed to tell;  
If with green withes or new ropes he were bound  
His strength would be as that of other men;  
He snapped them both as though he hardly knew  
That he was bound; and brought the girl to shame.  
Delilah, find the secret of his strength;  
Riches are thine if thou discover it;  
And thou be thought the saviour of thy land;  
Thy life will otherwise be forfeited,  
Thou and thy family perish from the earth.

DELILAH:

I love him more than friends or native land;  
No bribe nor threat could move me to betray  
Him to his foes; yet if he played me false  
No matter how I love, I would not spare.

ZEMEAH:

And if thou learnest that he doth not love  
Thee, my Delilah, know my love is true;  
Spite of the neighbors' sneers and thine own scorn,  
I love thee; leave thy foe and turn to me.

DELILAH:

I do not love thee, nor can ever love  
Not only thee, but any other man  
Than Samson; if he play me false, my love

Will be forever dead. Go, let me think.

*(They leave. Samson is heard coming humming. Delilah continues.)*

My loved one cometh, what am I to do?

I am afraid, yet there's no turning back;

To save my life I would not play thee false,

But oh the haunting fear of losing thee.

Thee I must test, yet I will not betray;

If thou dost speak the truth, then will I die,

Ere I thy secret to thy foes will tell.

SAMSON:

Why dost approach so timidly, my love?

Like the young doe in springtime to its mate,

Leaping and bounding, thou art wont to come,

Tell me the cause of sadness and of fear;

I will dispel them with my hottest kiss.

*(Kisses her madly)*

DELILAH:

Oh how thou pressest hard upon my lips

Thy kisses hurt in spite of ecstasy;

Thou claspest me until I scarcely breathe;

Tell me the secret of thy wondrous strength.

SAMSON:

My strength? When in thy presence I am weak

As water. E'en the slightest frown from thee

Doth make me quiver like a stricken hare:

Thou hast that frown tonight, what aileth thee?

DELILAH:

The same old fear, thou dost not truly love;

I asked thy secret twice; twice hast thou lied;

The green withes broke like slender spider webs;

The new ropes snapped as though but rotten cords;

Some day like them our bonds of love will break,

And I be spurned as rubbish like the rest;

I cannot stand the thought of losing thee,

Nor could I bear the burden of that shame,  
The sneer of family and of former friends,  
Who now declare that thou dost love me not.

SAMSON:

My sweet, to stay thy fears and quell thy doubts  
I will reveal the secret of my power:  
An angel told my mother ere my birth  
That she must dedicate me to the Lord,  
My sign of dedication, locks unshorn;  
Were but my long locks severed from my head,  
Jehovah would desert me to my fate,  
I then would be as weak as other men.  
See how I trust thee, Love, for now I sleep,  
My secret safe in my Beloved's care;  
My loved one, sing a slumber song to me.  
*(Delilah sings while Samson drops off in slumber. The  
music is from "Sing, Smile, Slumber" by Gounod.\*)*

DELILAH:

When thou art lying at eve on my breast,  
Breathing forth song,  
Dost thou hear my heart whisper:  
To thee I belong?  
The sweet strains are like sunbeams  
That around our souls play:  
Ah!  
Then sing, I'll sing, beloved one,  
Nor ever cease my lay,  
Yea, sing, sing on, beloved,  
Nor cease my lay:  
Sing on, sing ever, ah!  
Never cease.

When thou smilest so fondly,  
Love reigns monarch supreme,

---

\* This song is reprinted with the permission of the publishers, G. Schirmer Co.

And suspicion doth vanish  
At once, as would a dream!  
Yes, that smile proveth clearly  
Thou couldst never deceive.  
Ah!  
Smile on, for while thou smilest  
I shall ever believe,  
Then smile, yes, smile, beloved,  
For I believe.  
Smile on, smile on,  
Ah! ever smile.

When weighed down by soft slumber,  
Thy bright eyes slowly close,  
And I view thee before me  
So calm in thy repose,  
Thy fair lips murmur gently,  
Art dreaming, love, of me?  
Ah!

If such should be thy dreams, love,  
Dream I, too, love but of thee,  
Dream on,  
Dream I, too, love but of thee,  
I'm thy slave,  
Dream on, beloved, dream on,  
Ah, dream, dream on.

*(Stops singing, looks tenderly at Samson, and continues)*

At last thou sleepest and thou trustest me.  
If thou dost trust, I never can betray;  
What if I perish and my people die?  
Yet, dost thou trust me or but jest again?  
How miserable I am, I must find out;  
If I should cut his locks and he were weak  
Unknown unto his foes we would escape.

*(Cuts his hair. Sound of feet upon the stair)*

Samson, beloved, pray God thou didst lie,  
Thy foes have found thee and thy locks are shorn;  
Oh Samson's god, turn not thy face from him,  
Oh grant him strength to fight against his foes!  
*(Philistines rush in, seize and bind him after short but sharp struggle.)*

ZEMEAH *(embracing Delilah)*:

So treacherous little harlot he did love  
And trust thee with the secret of his strength;  
Thy country justly will be proud of thee,  
And I shall give thee kisses for thy pay:  
Thou shouldst not struggle so, and yet thou must  
Lest that thy lover learn that thou wert false;  
Say was it fear that caused thee to betray,  
Or didst thou do the deed for love of me?

DELILAH *(sobbing)*:

I hate thee, leave me; I was not afraid:  
I did not know, I did not mean it thus:  
I only did the deed to test his love;  
I did not know that we could be betrayed.

SAMSON:

A likely story, take the wench away;  
Out of my sight, thou harlot, out of sight;  
God grant I never see thy face again!

ZEMEAH:

For once thy god will hear and answer prayer,  
Her face thou wilt not see, yet she will stay  
And see her lover humbled in the dust.  
Bring on the torches, we shall have them now  
For other use than setting fields afire;  
Bring me a needle, heat the point white hot.

DELILAH *(screaming)*:

No, no, be not so cruel, torture me,  
But do not burn his eyes and leave him blind.



ZEMEAH:

So for thy Hebrew lover thou dost plead?  
The dog must beg for mercy for himself: (*Delilah screams.*)  
Take her away, her screaming vexeth me.  
Thou Hebrew dog, wouldst thou to Dagon pray  
The god might touch my heart to show thee mercy.

SAMSON:

To Israel's God, Jehovah, do I pray;  
Nor do I fear thee or thy heathen god,  
Bring on thy torture, I shall not complain.  
(*Needle is applied. Samson shrieks in pain.*)

ZEMEAH:

Thou'll not complain? Thou shriekest like a girl;  
Where now thy courage and thy boasted strength!  
Thy cry doth make sweet music for mine ears:  
And thou who tortured us and laughed in scorn  
Wilt furnish joy for those whom thou despised.  
(*Goes to parapet and calls out*)  
We have the Hebrew slave (*Cheers*) both bound and  
blind; (*Cheers*)  
Arouse the city, spread the joyful news (*Cheers*)  
The slave will turn our mill and grind our corn (*Cheers*)  
Praise be to Dagon, he is ours at last. (*Cheers*)

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### ACT III—*The Revenge*

ANNOUNCER: And so Delilah betrays Samson through fear and mistrust. The Philistines throw him in the dungeon in the basement of the Temple of Dagon, where he spends his dull and weary hours lamenting his fate and grinding the corn of his enemies. Months pass away, and Samson's hair has grown again, without causing him to realize that his strength has returned. The day of the Feast of Dagon has arrived, and plans are being made to bring this arch enemy of the Philistines before the people that

they may deride him. On the morning of the feast Samson's father and mother are approaching the temple and discussing Samson and his fate. Manoah speaks.

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MANOAH:

There is the temple of their heathen god,  
Our son is in the dungeon at its base;  
Jehovah hath deserted him methinks;  
He first deserted God, it is but just.

TAMAR:

Jehovah hath deserted him, 'tis true;  
That he deserveth such treatment I deny;  
He bravely fought against the heathen foe  
And shamefully God left him to his fate.  
*(They hear the creaking of the mill and the chant of Samson.)*

My boy, my poor wild boy, they made him blind,  
Had they but left him sight the day would come  
When he would tear their cursed temple down,  
Here cometh he who burned his dear eyes out.

ZEMEAH:

What seek ye here, who sired the Hebrew dog?  
Your whelp is shut from sight within the walls.

MANOAH:

Can we not see our son? We came so far.

ZEMEAH:

Ye cannot see him now, he must prepare  
To go to Dagon's temple; ye may there  
Behold him as he maketh merriment  
To please the people whom he long defied;  
Or ye, perchance, may think it would defile  
Your precious selves to visit heathen shrines.

MANOAH:

We will not go; the heathen gods are base,  
Jehovah and not Dagon is our god;

Had not our son succumbed to heathen wiles,  
Jehovah had not left him to his fate.

TAMAR:

Jehovah is as base as heathen god;  
And Samson's served him well only at last  
To be deserted in the foeman's hands,  
A heartless god hath such ingratitude.  
But to the temple I will never go  
To see them make my son a thing of sport.  
(*They go away. Delilah appears on the scene.*)

ZEMEAH:

Well, my Delilah, so 'tis thou again.  
And dost thou seek to see thy lover, too?

DELILAH:

Zemeah, is there truth in the report  
That Samson is to be a jest today  
And furnish foolish sport at Dagon's feast?

ZEMEAH:

'Tis true, Delilah, wouldst thou go with him?  
Thou mayst, if thou wilt, go to him now;  
Sing him the song that thou didst sing the night  
His locks were shorn and he did lose his strength;  
Perhaps thy charms will cause him sleep again,  
And bring him dreams within the dungeon walls.  
Then when he cometh to the temple feast  
Come thou along and help him make his sport,  
The people glad will hail thy noble deed  
Betraying their worst foe into their hands.

DELILAH:

Be not so cruel, cause him not this shame;  
I do entreat thee, on my bended knee;  
Thou once desiredst me; I will be thine  
To have as thou dost wish.

ZEMEAH (*interrupting harshly*):

Have as I wish?

I have no wish for thee, desire hath fled;  
Thy beauty now hath faded, gone the bloom  
Of youth from out thy cheeks, thy hair is gray;  
The lines of sin have spoiled thy lovely face.  
Thy lover's blindness saveth him the sight  
Of hollow eyes, and cheeks grown pale and gaunt;  
He'd wonder why he risked his life for thee.  
And as for me, wert thou as lovely now  
As when my love thou spurned, it were too late;  
For love rejected turneth into hate.

DELILAH:

I only made thee offer of myself  
To save poor Samson from this further pain;  
Would that his sightless eyes could see my face,  
Then would he know that I have suffered, too;  
To Dagon's temple will I gladly go,  
But as a friend of Samson, there to share  
The shame and suffering which to him I brought.  
*(The grinding and chanting have been going on in an undertone. Now they become louder as she enters the dungeon. When Samson realizes that someone has entered, the grinding and chanting cease.)*

SAMSON:

Who cometh there to mock me in my sorrow?  
I cannot see, but sense an enemy.

DELILAH:

'Tis I, Delilah, Samson, as a friend.

SAMSON *(laughs terribly)*:

Take not the name of friend upon such lips,  
Thou treacherous harlot, worst of all my foes.

DELILAH:

I am thy friend, I swear it by thy God.

SAMSON *(again laughing)*:

Swear by my God? Why not by Dagon, then?  
For Israel's god hath left me to my foes,

And played me false and left me, just as thou.  
Away with thee, come not to mock me now,  
Speak not again, I hate those silver tones  
That caused me to forget my home and God  
And all the high resolves that swayed my life.  
The only joy my blindness bringeth me  
Is to be spared the sight of thy false face.

DELILAH:

Couldst thou but see the signs of suffering there,  
Thou mightest, then, believe I was not false.

SAMSON:

As false as shades of darkness! This vile place,  
Vermin and filth, rats and the stench of mire,  
Are lovely when compared with thoughts of thee,  
Stay thou thy distance, lest I cause thee hurt.

DELILAH:

Slay me, if thou dost hate me, but first feel  
The lines that mark my suffering and my grief.  
*(Samson feels her face.)*

SAMSON:

Yea, thou hast suffered, still I marvel now  
I slay thee not when thou art in my power.

DELILAH:

How gladly would I suffer death from thee,  
If death would but atone for my mistake.  
But even now some kindness I may do;  
Today they carry thee to Dagon's feast,  
There to make sport and furnish merriment:  
This poison which I bring will save thee shame;  
Together let us die and cheat the foe.  
*(Discovers that his hair has grown again. Cries joyfully)*  
Samson, thy beard and hair have grown again.  
Perhaps Jehovah bringeth back thy strength.

SAMSON:

'Tis true, my strength hath come again to me.  
(*Seizes the mighty beam and cracks it. Delilah stops him.*)  
Oh, if I only had my sight again!

DELILAH:

Nay, break it not, for 'twould betray thy power,  
Let no one know that strength hath come again;  
In Dagon's temple mighty pillars stand  
The roof upholding, thou canst break them down  
And thus avenge thee of the mighty wrongs  
Done both unto thyself and to thy God.  
I, too, will go and gladly die with thee.  
(*Samson pulls her to him and kisses her.*)

SAMSON:

My heart is glad once more, and I am glad  
That blindness doth not let me see thy face;  
I would remember thee as long ago  
Thine eyes shone brightly when our love was young.  
Here cometh one to lead us to our fate.  
(*Sound of approaching guide. Noise of crowd is heard in distance, gradually increasing. Samson is led away to temple. After he has been placed in a position of prominence where all the people can see him, Zemeah speaks.*)

ZEMEAH:

Ye see before you, blind and bound in chains,  
Him who was once our country's fiercest foe;  
And at his side the harlot who betrayed  
Her lover to his foes through jealousy.  
No praise is due her, all the praise is due  
To our god, Dagon, whom we worship now.  
(*Noise of cheering and taunting*)  
Speak, Hebrew dog, where is Jehovah now,  
That he should leave thee here to do our will?

SAMSON:

Ye well may taunt me, broken now and blind;  
Jehovah is not weak, 'tis I who sinned,  
And I have suffered as the price of sin;  
Yet that his mighty name may be extolled,  
On his great power I call to aid my hands,  
In wreaking vengeance on his meanest foes. (*To Delilah*)  
Farewell, Delilah, I no hatred hold,  
My happiness and love have come again,  
I do forgive thee. Oh Jehovah God,  
Send thou thy power now to strengthen me,  
And send destruction on this heathen foe.  
(*Pulls down temple with crash.*)

ANNOUNCER: And so the temple fell and those whom Samson slew in his death were more than all those whom he slew in his lifetime. As the temple fell, his father and mother were lingering in the near distance. They see the temple totter and hear the crash.

MANOAH:

Thank God, his real worth he doth prove at last.

TAMAR:

And God at last hath proved his righteousness,  
The angel's promises have been fulfilled.

CURTAIN

## VII

# *The Shepherd King*

*David Unites the Nation*

### PERSONS

DAVID		A SOLDIER
ELIAB	} brothers of David	A CAPTAIN
SHAMMAH		HIRAM, King of Tyre
SAUL, King of Israel		MEPHIBOSHETH, son of Jonathan
		JOAB, Commander-in-chief of David's army

### PLACES

- ACT I. *In Front of a Tent in the Camp of Israel*  
 ACT II. *The Tent of King Saul, a Few Hours Later*  
 ACT III. *The Edge of the Battlefield, the Next Morning*  
 ACT IV. *King David's Palace, Thirty Years Later*

### PROPERTIES

<i>Crowns</i>	<i>Swords and spears for soldiers</i>
<i>Harp for David</i>	<i>Bundle of provisions</i>
<i>Sling and stones</i>	

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### ACT I—*The Challenge*

ANNOUNCER: Centuries have passed since Moses led the Children of Israel up from Egypt, through the wilderness, and gave them a system of laws and formed a government. Under Joshua, his successor, they won for themselves a place in Canaan and settled there. Many conflicts took place between them and the surrounding tribes. In most of these conflicts they were led by judges. Finally they demanded and received a king. Their first king was Saul, a Benjamite, of great stature. During the



early part of his reign he offended Jehovah, and David, a youth of Bethlehem, was anointed to succeed him. Saul actually remained king until his death, however. At the time of the story, Saul was engaged in warfare with the Philistines who had in their army a giant, Goliath of Gath, who daily challenged the Israelites to send out a champion to engage him in combat. Three of David's brothers were in Saul's army; and his father, Jesse, sent him to carry them food and inquire as to their welfare.

As the scene opens, the three brothers, Eliab, Abinadab, and Shamamah, are loitering before their tent in the late evening. Eliab speaks.

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ELIAB:

Another day hath past as yesterday,  
Empty and dull, and when tomorrow dawneth  
'Twill be as drear and idle as today—  
If something would but happen—

SHAMMAH:

Something? What?

Meet thou the giant; fight him to the death.

ELIAB:

I am a soldier and I fight in war,  
And not in single combat; let the king  
Accept the challenge, was he not the choice  
Of Samuel, since in stature great he stood?

SHAMMAH:

Wert thou as great in courage as in size  
The nation might a saviour find in thee;  
Thou mightst have been the prophet's choice for king.

ELIAB:

The stripling, David, was his foolish choice.

SHAMMAH:

Come, Eliab, do not let this vex thee sore;  
Samuel hath other record than a fool's;  
For years he judged and governed Israel well,  
And even now he giveth Saul commands.

ELIAB:

No monarch ever needed counsel more:  
In cowardice he skulketh in the tent;  
And as this giant passeth boldly by,  
Defying Israel by his heathen gods  
To offer fight, Saul sitteth idly by,  
Afraid to fight, and impotent to lead;  
And Samuel's folly once again is shown.

SHAMMAH:

Thou speakest slight of Samuel, but if Saul  
Or thou or other fighting man but had  
The spirit of the seer, the fight were won.  
Dost thou recall the day when Amalek  
Was overcome in battle, and the sheep,  
The oxen, yea, and e'en the king himself  
Were brought by Saul in glory from their land?  
Old Samuel's anger seethed and blazed and burned,  
He turned in wrath on Agag, Amalek's king,  
Hewed him to pieces as "before the Lord."

ELIAB:

Oh that was years ago, thy sacred seer  
Hath little credit now, except with thee:  
Did we believe his words and trust his deeds,  
David, not Saul, would sit on Israel's throne.  
Canst thou recall when he on David's brow  
Poured out the oil, anointing him as king?

SHAMMAH:

'Tis clear as though it happened yesterday,  
When Samuel came it roused my father's fears,  
But soon they vanished, wonder came instead:  
Jehovah had withdrawn his power from Saul,  
And one of Jesse's sons should take his place.  
He bade our father cause his sons to pass  
In line before him, seven sons were sent.  
"Not these," he said, "hast thou another son?"

"A stripling youth," said Father, "in the fields."  
He sent for David, Samuel poured the oil  
Upon the young lad's head and made him king.  
(*A soldier approaches, escorting David to his brothers' tent.*)

SOLDIER:

Ye sons of Jesse, hither cometh one  
Who claimeth that your father was his sire;  
So goodly he appeareth it is strange  
To think of him as kin to Eliab,  
But since he claimeth such, I must not doubt.

ELIAB (*astonished*):

David! What dost thou here, thou stripling bold?  
Why leavest thou thy sheep without a guard?

DAVID:

My father sent me hither, bade me bring  
These loaves of bread to thee, this parched corn,  
And ask as to thy welfare—

ELIAB:

Reason vain!

Thou comest hither in a curious mood  
To see the battle; or perhaps as king—  
Since Samuel poured the oil upon thy head—  
The army thou dost come to take in charge.

SOLDIER:

As king? What meanest thou? Why say "as king"?  
And why so scornfully accost the lad?

ELIAB:

Hast thou not heard that this is Israel's king,  
Whom Samuel did anoint to rule the land?  
Should this but reach the maddened ears of Saul,  
He might at last bestir himself to fight  
At least this young pretender to the throne.

SOLDIER:

He looketh fair and strong enough to rule;

My service I would gladly render him;  
Come, Eliab, clear thy brow of hostile frown,  
And make thy brother welcome to the camp.

ELIAB:

A lad so young doth have a place at home,  
Nor should he meddle with the ways of men:  
The prophet's vain delusion he hath caught,  
And verily believeth he will rule.

DAVID:

My brother, I have ever treated thee  
With that respect that falleth to thy due;  
What if I do believe the prophet's word?  
I am as loyal to the king as thou,  
And loyal will remain until he die:  
Full oft these recent days within his court  
I have made music that he might be cheered:  
And I have learned to love him as I played.

SOLDIER:

If thou canst cheer him, then the Lord be praised  
That thou art come at such an hour as this:  
In moodiness he mopeth in his tent—  
When at the close of day the giant bold  
Threw out his challenge with his heathen oaths,  
Saul shivered in despair—

DAVID:

What giant bold?

What is this thing that doth affright the king  
And causeth him to sink in such despair?  
I fain would know—

ELIAB:

Be silent, untried youth!

This is no matter for a lad like thee;  
'Tis but in pride and haughtiness of heart  
Thou comest; 'tis no place, as yet, for thee.

DAVID:

Where have I erred in speaking? Tell me, pray.

ELIAB (*sarcastically*):

Since thou believest that thou art the king  
Thy nation's shame and sorrow thou shouldst know:  
We cannot fight the army of the foe,  
But must to single combat make resort  
And fight a giant, great Goliath of Gath;  
In height and size o'erwhelming and in strength;  
We have no champion who can equal him;  
Saul is in stature greater than the rest,  
And he doth loiter in his tent dismayed.

DAVID:

The king is surely ill; no heart so bold  
As that which beateth in his manly breast  
Can shrink in cowardice from any foe.  
Perhaps with music I can offer cheer,  
Revive his spirits in his saddened heart.

ELIAB:

Thou art presumptuous; why not ask the king  
To let thee fight the giant in his stead?  
Wealth he hath offered to the winner brave;  
No risk he runneth; there is none so bold  
As will accept his offer—

DAVID:

None so bold!

Why dareth none to battle with this foe?

ELIAB:

Thou fool! My words were offered but in jest:  
Thy pardon, young King David, I forgot  
That Saul doth offer, too, his daughter's hand  
Unto the champion that shall slay this foe,—  
Thou then, my lord, can doubly claim the crown.

SHAMMAH:

'Twere better far to hide thy feelings sore.

SOLDIER:

Lad, wert thou truly minstrel at the court?  
As guard I once was stationed there and heard  
A lad make wondrous music on the harp;  
'Twas at the ending of the winter moon.

DAVID:

'Twas then I made my music for the king.

SOLDIER:

Then thou canst doubtless break the spell again,  
For surely never mood of worse despair  
Could seize him than the gloom that held him then:  
Days upon days he lay without a sound,  
Heedless of heat or cold, of meat or drink;  
At times both blind and dumb he agonized  
As if to raise his soul again to life,  
Then sank again in stupor, dull and drear:  
Thy music caused the spell to disappear;  
Such merry melody I never heard:  
What sayest thou? Come play for us a tune,  
So shall we all rejoice, save Eliab.

*(David unwraps his harp, strums once or twice and plays a melody. Others come up to listen and murmur, "Good, good." He sings a song. Then strikes up a tune. Others offer to sing. They sing the song. Finally the Captain comes up.)*

CAPTAIN:

Who maketh music here? The king would know.

SOLDIER:

Young David, Jesse's son, from Bethlehem.

CAPTAIN:

Come thou with me; the king hath need of thee.

ACT II—*The Champion*

ANNOUNCER: The next scene is laid in the tent of King Saul. The King sits in a half-stupor staring straight ahead of him. He hardly notices David and the Captain when they first enter. He is murmuring to himself.

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SAUL:

No one to fight the foe: no one can fight  
Or no one will; it is my hour of doom;  
My soldiers shrink in cowardice away,  
Yet we must fight, or yield without a blow:  
Methinks Jehovah hath deserted us,  
And Samuel's curse at last hath been fulfilled.  
*(Suddenly notices David and the Captain standing within  
the tent)*

Ho, captain, hast thou brought the minstrel in?

CAPTAIN:

The lad who made the music is at hand.

SAUL:

Come hither, lad, for thou art but a lad;  
Approach thy king, for he would speak to thee:  
Art thou the minstrel whose sweet melodies  
Have driven deep depression from the camp?

DAVID:

I have been playing on my harp, my lord.

SAUL:

Then make thou music once again for me,  
For I am weary and would fain have rest;  
Rest from the thoughts that fill me with despair.

DAVID:

My lord, the king, hath only to command;  
It is his servant's duty to obey;  
Only say thou what music thou dost want.

SAUL:

What music? Melody that cureth care,  
And bringeth peace unto the troubled mind;  
The foe doth mock us for our cowardice;  
My soldiers sulk in silence, as for me  
I rue the day that ever I was born.

DAVID:

That blessed day a noble king was born.

SAUL:

A king whose crown is but a mark of shame,  
Whose heart is heavy and whose spirit sad.

DAVID:

Jehovah guide my song to touch thine heart.  
(*David plays a few bars with his harp and then sings.*  
Tune: "O Rest in the Lord," from Mendelssohn's  
*Elijah*.)

SONG:

O, rest in the Lord, wait patiently for him,  
And He shall give thee thy heart's desires:  
O, rest in the Lord, wait patiently for him  
And He shall give thee thy heart's desires,  
And He shall give thee thy heart's desires.  
Commit thy way unto Him, and trust in Him;  
Commit thy way unto Him, and trust in Him;  
And fret not thyself because of evil doers.  
O rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him.  
O rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him,  
And He shall give thee thy heart's desires,  
And He shall give thee thy heart's desires,  
And He shall give thee thy heart's desires,  
O rest in the Lord, O rest in the Lord,  
And wait, wait, patiently for Him.

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\*The words of the songs in this drama are taken from *Sacred Music the Whole World Loves*, published by D. Appleton-Century Company, and are reprinted with their permission.



SAUL:

My spirit findeth comfort in thy song;  
But with the morrow's dawn will come again  
A shame and sorrow that I cannot bear.

DAVID:

Jehovah's strength will come to give thee aid.

SAUL:

Would that thy faith could fill my troubled breast.

DAVID:

My faith is fixed on Him, the Lord of Hosts;  
He will assist his servants in the fight.

*(David again strikes a few chords on the harp and then  
sings. This time the song is "But the Lord is Mindful  
of His Own." It is taken from the Oratorio St. Paul  
and is also by Mendelssohn.)*

SONG:

But the Lord is mindful of his own,  
He remembers his children,  
But the Lord is mindful of his own,  
The Lord remembers his children,  
Remembers his children.  
Bow down before him, ye mighty,  
For the Lord is near us.  
Bow down before him, ye mighty,  
For the Lord is near us.  
Yea the Lord is mindful of his own,  
He remembers his children,  
Bow down before him, ye mighty,  
For the Lord is near us.

SAUL:

God send a man of faith to fight the foe.

DAVID:

Let me but be the champion of the Lord.

SAUL:

Thou surely jestest, but a stripling thou;  
The giant is a mighty man of war.

DAVID:

The god of battles is of greater might,  
And He will help me overcome the foe.  
A bear, a lion, once attacked my flock,  
I slew them, and can slay the giant, too.

SAUL:

Go, and our God, Jehovah, give thee strength.  
Stay, take mine armor, wear it to the fray.  
*(David examines armor and puts it away.)*

DAVID:

Nay, nay, my lord, I cannot go with these,  
I have not proved them, let me take my sling.

SAUL:

Thy courage gives me strength, but ere thou go  
Sing me again a song of courage bold.  
*(David strikes the chords upon his harp and begins a  
martial air, as the scene closes.)*

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### ACT III—*The Conflict*

ANNOUNCER: And thus the minstrel lad stirred the heart of the King to hope and courage. And when the morrow came and the giant strode forth to offer a challenge to the hosts of Israel, Saul did not shrink in his tent but boldly came forth to the edge of the field of battle where he looked out over the foe.

As the scene opens, a trumpet sounds, sending out defiance from the camp of the Philistines. A roar of exultation and derision from the foe is met by groans and a sullen murmur from the camp of Israel. The Captain, Eliab, and others are watching the King as he looks expectantly away in the distance.

ELIAB:

The stripling hath worked wonders, see the king,  
He doth not lurk and linger in his tent,  
But gazeth eagerly upon the field.

CAPTAIN:

Saul gave the lad consent to fight the foe,  
Methinks that madness must have seized them both.

ELIAB:

My brother fighteth with the great Goliath!  
He goeth to his death, he must be saved;  
Although I fear the giant, I will go  
And do him battle, though it mean my death.

CAPTAIN:

Thou art too late, the battle now is joined;  
See where the giant strutteth down the field,  
Hurling defiance to the Lord of Hosts.  
*(They approach Saul, who eagerly watches the conflict.)*

SAUL:

The battle is unequal, I repent  
That ever I allowed the lad to go;  
Such faith he had that God, the Lord of Hosts,  
Would give him strength, I gave him my consent.

ELIAB:

What shall I tell my father if he die?  
And die he must at hands of such a foe.

CAPTAIN:

The giant draweth nigh, the lad is mad  
To go so bravely to this certain death.

ELIAB:

He carrieth but a sling within his hand,  
A stone can hardly pierce a coat of mail.

SAUL:

I cannot bear to look, what dost thou see?

CAPTAIN:

The giant cometh on with haughty stride,

And curseth David with a fearful oath;  
He lifteth up the mighty spear to strike:  
If David feel the power of that stroke,  
The carrion crows will find him for their feast.

SAUL:

What doth the lad? Doth he the giant flee?

CAPTAIN:

A stone he fitteth in his trusty sling,  
And calmly waiteth for the coming foe.  
(*More groans and cries heard from the opposing forces*)

SAUL:

Once more, I pray thee, look; the dread suspense  
Is fearful, hath he yet the missile thrown?

CAPTAIN:

He runneth swiftly toward the giant foe,  
He pauseth now to hurl. (*Increased cries from the field*)

SAUL:

Speak, is he down?

CAPTAIN:

Aye, he is down, not David, but the foe;  
The lad doth hasten forward, with the sword  
The giant bore, he cutteth off his head;  
The day is ours, and Israel hath been saved.

SAUL:

Saved! We are saved! Jehovah's name be praised!  
(*Music—"Saul Hath Slain His Thousands."*)

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#### ACT IV—*The Coronation*

ANNOUNCER: More than thirty years have passed away since the shepherd lad, David, slew the great Goliath and saved the day for Israel. He at once became a popular national hero and incurred the jealous hostility of the King. Saul became so enraged that he tried to slay David and declared him an outlaw. During his period of outlawry David had Saul in his power on

more than one occasion and yet spared him. He became a very close friend to Saul's own son Jonathan, and when Saul and Jonathan were slain in battle he mourned their loss. After Saul's death, David was crowned king of two tribes, Judah and Benjamin. It was not until the death of Saul's son, who ruled over the other ten tribes for seven years, that David was proclaimed king over all Israel. He at once went about the task of consolidating the kingdom which he effected by punishing Saul's enemies, befriending the kinsmen of Saul, bringing back the ark to Jerusalem, capturing Jerusalem and making it the capital, entering upon foreign conquests, and making friends of other nations.

At the time of this scene the friends of David are gathered in his palace to celebrate his accession to the throne of all Israel. (The musicians play a triumphal march. A trumpet sounds. There are shouts of "The king," "The king," "God save the king.") Touched by their welcome, David speaks.

---

DAVID:

Ye men of Judah and of Israel,  
My long divided, now united land;  
My heart rejoiceth greatly in this hour:  
Our strife is now at end; the house of Saul,  
I now bid welcome as it were mine own;  
Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan,  
Is welcomed at the court as though my son;  
Those enemies who slew Jehovah's choice,  
Have all, at my command, been punished sore.

MEPHIBOSHETH:

My lord, the king, is gracious; gratitude  
From all the house of Saul he will receive;  
Could Jonathan, my father and thy friend,  
Have seen this day, he had been satisfied:  
The many centuries may come and go,  
Ere such another friendship will be found.  
The house of Saul doth pledge its loyalty.

DAVID:

My heart doth melt in thankfulness and praise,  
That my dissevered land is now at peace:  
A peace that doth unite the land in one;  
That cometh from the conquest of our foes:  
Joab, that greatest general of them all,  
Hath gathered glory to his country's name.

JOAB:

Again the king is gracious, but his praise  
Is merited by those in my command.  
I claim no glory, ask for no reward,  
Yet still must praise our country's men-at-arms:  
North, South, yea East and West, their fame hath gone;  
Terror hath stricken all our former foes:  
Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Amalek;  
Jerusalem is conquered; now at last,  
A central city for the throne is found.

DAVID:

A central city hath indeed been found;  
Here they may worship, here Jehovah find;  
The ark hath been reclaimed from foreign lands.  
It lodgeth now upon our sacred soil;  
Nathan, the prophet, doth permission give  
To build a temple here, a house of God.  
(*Trumpet sound is heard. Hiram, King of Tyre, enters.*)

DAVID:

Thou art most welcome royal guest from Tyre  
A noble king, of noble people thou;  
Praise is thy due that we should honored be  
By thy most gracious presence—

HIRAM:

'Tis for us  
To give thee proper thanks most noble king,  
That thou dost bid us welcome at thy court:  
I bring thee warmest greetings from my land,

And offer of perpetual friendship, too.

'Tis thine to give command, we will obey.

*(The celebration is interrupted by the entrance of Nathan, the prophet. He hesitates a second and then speaks reluctantly.)*

NATHAN:

Beloved king, mine heart is stricken sore  
That I, to thee, must now ungracious seem;  
Jehovah hath commanded, I must speak:  
Thou art forbidden now a house to build,  
Jehovah hath no need of house from thee,  
He will establish thee a throne instead:  
Thy name is great and it shall greater be;  
Greatest among the mighty men of earth;  
And when thy days are numbered and asleep  
Thou fallest with thy fathers, then thy son  
Shall sit upon thy throne and spread its fame,  
He shall the temple build to God's great name,  
His kingdom God will 'stablish evermore,  
And never from thy seed shall it depart.

DAVID:

My heart to God I now would lift in prayer:  
O thou Jehovah, king of Israel,  
With whom none can compare in mightiness;  
Whose people are the greatest in the earth;  
Thy name be praised, thou hast thy servant bless'd,  
And promised that his seed should ever rule:  
Thy name O God, be ever magnified;  
Thy kingdom 'stablished ever in the earth.  
The prayer of David, Israel's king, is ended.  
*(Music—Perhaps "Lift up your Head O ye Gates.")*

CURTAIN

# VIII

## *The Rain Bride*

### *Elijah's Battle with Baal*

#### PERSONS

ELIJAH, <i>the Prophet</i>	RHODA, <i>maid-in-waiting to</i>
AHAB, <i>King of Israel</i>	<i>Jezebel</i>
JEZEBEL, <i>Queen of Israel</i>	GAAL, <i>priest of Baal</i>
OBADIAH, <i>Ahab's servant</i>	JOASH AND ABIJAH, <i>sentinels</i>
	PEOPLE

#### PLACES

- ACT I. *The Garden in Front of Ahab's Palace*  
 ACT II. *Same, a Little More than Three Years Later*  
 ACT III. *Mt. Carmel, the Same Day*

#### PROPERTIES

<i>Crowns for King and Queen</i>	<i>Jewelry for the Queen</i>
<i>Staff for Elijah</i>	<i>Knives for priest of Baal</i>
<i>Spears for sentinels</i>	<i>Materials for altars</i>
	<i>Drums and sheet iron for thunder</i>

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#### ACT I—*The Curse*

ANNOUNCER: It is high noon in the history of the people of Israel. After David's reign, Solomon succeeded him as king and introduced a régime of splendor and luxury that eventually led to the disruption of the kingdom. He also allowed foreign wives to enter Israel, bring in their own favorite deities, and thus introduce idolatry on a large scale in the land. After the disruption, the northern kingdom, Israel, lost its reverence for the laws of Jehovah, and many of its kings were wicked. Among the worst of these was Omri, the father of Ahab. But the



wicked son was even worse than the wicked father. He married Jezebel, the daughter of the King of Tyre, herself a priestess of Ashtoreth. The licentious worship of Baal became prevalent. Sun, moon, and stars were worshipped as the Host of Heaven. Sex orgies were engaged in "on every high hill and under every green tree." The prophets of Jehovah were persecuted and His religion sorely neglected.

The opening scene is laid in the garden in front of Ahab's palace. Weird music is heard in the distance. Two sentinels are keeping watch. As the scene opens, they approach from opposite sides of the stage. The older halts the younger with the familiar challenge in use at the time.

---

FIRST SENTINEL:

Watchman, what sayest thou, what of the night?

SECOND SENTINEL:

Soldier, the first watch endeth, all is well.

FIRST SENTINEL:

So it is thou, Abijah; all is well?

Were I reporting as a sentinel

I, too, would say the watch is at an end;

But as a servant of the living God,

Jehovah, I would doubt if all were well.

SECOND SENTINEL:

Mine Uncle, if my counsel thou wouldst seek,

I would advise thee speak as sentinel;

Jehovah's servants stand not well at court:

But why complainest thou of such a night?

FIRST SENTINEL:

The evil fiends of darkness fill the land

Spite of yon golden stars and silvery moon;

Which, though created for the light of man,

Are worshipped now as gods within themselves:

Base Ashtoreth is worshipped, incense burned,

And meat and drink consumed to honor her.

SECOND SENTINEL:

Come, Uncle Joash, thou art growing old;  
Did but the fires of youth within thee burn  
Thou, too, mightst join the shrine of Ashtoreth.

FIRST SENTINEL:

The fires of youth have never blazed so hot  
As cause me to forget Jehovah's laws.

SECOND SENTINEL:

Jehovah's laws! Another day hath dawned,  
New customs come to take the place of old.

FIRST SENTINEL:

Perhaps new customs, but the same old sin:  
Adultery and idol worship, too,  
Are now observed as though they were of God.

SECOND SENTINEL:

Thy words are harsh, mine uncle, what to you  
Is open sin, to them hath sanctity:  
The shrines of Baal have virgins who in love  
Devote their bodies to religion's cause.

FIRST SENTINEL:

Virgins! The Wise man had a name for them:  
"Her lips," said he, "Drip as the honey comb,  
Her feet descend unto the depths of hell."

SECOND SENTINEL:

Oh, Solomon and Moses both have gone,  
Their day is done and no one heedeth them:  
If youth and love are shared to worship God,  
What harm is done?

FIRST SENTINEL:

To justify a wrong  
Is easy but no good can come of this:  
A curse on Israel will Jehovah send;  
Did not the prophet Moses so declare?  
The heavens above would be as brass, the earth

Would be like iron; the rain would turn to dust,  
Astonishment and madness seize us all?

SECOND SENTINEL:

No heed is given to an empty voice  
While herds increase and fields with grain abound:  
Doth Baal or doth Jehovah send these gifts?  
*(Two coquettish maidens enter. One speaks to the sentinels.)*

MAIDEN:

Come, go with us to worship Ashtoreth,  
Her sacred shrines afford a night of joy.

FIRST SENTINEL:

Go on thy way, thou wanton, wicked wench;  
Sell thou thy soul for silver if thou wilt,  
But leave alone the souls of honest men:  
That I should ever live to see the day  
When in religion's name such evils stalk!

SECOND SENTINEL:

I like religion such as thine, sweet wench;  
I'll join thy worship soon as work is o'er.

FIRST SENTINEL:

No good can come of sinning such as this,  
But Obadiah approacheth, we must go.  
*(Sentinels leave hurriedly. Obadiah comes out in the foreground and stands for a moment, looking at the palace door. He talks to himself.)*

OBADIAH:

Rise up, my love, my fair one, come away:  
The winter now is past, the spring hath come,  
The flow'rs with fragrance fill this balmy air;  
The songs of birds make music everywhere:  
And still no fragrance will compare with thine;  
No music sound as sweetly as thy voice;  
Better than wine, than honey far more sweet,  
Than Rose of Sharon fairer, and than spice

More fragrant, is my fair one's love to me.  
Make haste, my love, my soul doth pine for thee.  
(*Rhoda enters hurriedly and looks around uneasily.*)

RHODA:

With whom art thou conversing, Obadiah?

OBADIAH:

I did but speak to thee, my love, and say  
How dull the moments while thou art away:  
I told thee of thy beauty and thy grace,  
Fairer than moon, clearer than summer sun,  
Brighter than golden stars that stud yon sky,  
As tender as the dove—

RHODA:

Thou silly sweet!

And yet I love the music of thy lies:  
I made delay not through a wish of mine,  
But Jezebel must have her bidding done;  
I tell thee, Obadiah, I like her not,  
Today her hands were busied with the cakes  
Which she, tonight, will offer from the roof  
To Ashtoreth, and to the host of heav'n;  
Were she not queen, her body would she give  
To aid the fearful liturgies of Baal.

OBADIAH:

Thou must not judge too harshly, Rhoda, sweet;  
Remember that her sire was priest of Baal;  
And priestess, she, at shrine of Ashtoreth:  
Perhaps her faith though wrong, is still sincere;  
Too, she is lonely, married to a king  
Older than she, a loveless marriage theirs;  
Religion, then, must take the place of love;  
'Tis ours to pity her and not condemn.

RHODA:

'Tis strange how well thou knowest her affairs,  
Methinks, as maid, her secrets I should know

Better than thou, still I have never heard  
The story of her sad and lonely life;  
Beware, my lover, lest thou learn too much.

OBADIAH:

A lonely woman, I but pity her!

RHODA:

Thou knowest pity is akin to love,  
Thy lonely queen may have her eyes on thee.

OBADIAH:

But I have eyes for only thee, my queen;  
To see thee once doth make me blind to all  
Of womankind, thou need not jealous be;  
Thou art my host of heaven, all the stars,  
The sun, the moon, the firmament in one.

RHODA:

Hush, Sweet, use not the wicked words of sin  
When speaking of our love; today the queen  
Besought young maids to join the wicked shrine—

OBADIAH:

Unspeakable! A shrine on every hill,  
And 'neath each spreading tree—and there in sin  
They revel, claiming that they worship god.  
On scenes like these, Jehovah cannot smile.

RHODA:

Another horror cometh, Obadiah;  
For Gaal, the priest of Baal, desireth me,  
He wanteth me to wife; Jehovah's laws  
He promiseth to keep if only I  
Will be his bride; I fear and loathe him so.

OBADIAH:

Let Gaal beware; for ere I'd see thee wed  
A priest of Baal, another law of God  
I would be tempted sore to break, the law  
That doth forbid the taking of a life.

RHODA:

Do not offend him, what if he should tell  
The queen that thou art hostile! And, my sweet—  
(*Hesitates*)

OBADIAH:

What aileth thee, my love, why dost thou fear  
And tremble even now within mine arms?

RHODA:

What if he want me and I should refuse?  
He might secure permission from the queen  
To make me bride of Baal—what a fate!  
Hasten, mine Obadiah, let us wed;  
They surely would respect our wedding vows.

OBADIAH:

Mine heart is grieved to tell thee, Rhoda, sweet,  
But longer than we feared, our wedding day  
Must be deferred; the queen hath made decree  
To kill the prophets of the living God:  
A hundred have I hid in dens and caves,  
My money all must go to buy them food.

RHODA:

Mine heart is heavy that we cannot wed;  
I fear some harm if we must longer wait;  
Jehovah's cause is first; I am content,  
I will be patient and will trust in God.

OBADIAH:

Thy gracious manner causeth even more  
Of grief to me, that we must longer wait.

RHODA:

Come, let's forget and talk about the flowers.

OBADIAH:

There is no flower like thy lovely self.

RHODA:

Who cometh hither, looking fierce and strange?

OBADIAH:

Jehovah's prophet; 'tis Elijah bold.

*(Elijah comes forward, looking fierce, and speaking in heavy tones.)*

ELIJAH:

Where dwelleth Ahab, Israel's wicked king?

OBADIAH:

My lord, the King doth in the palace dwell.

ELIJAH:

Tell him the servant of the living God,

Elijah, waiteth and would speak with him.

OBADIAH:

At such a message he will be enraged,

Were it not better thou shouldst seek the king?

ELIJAH:

The king of Israel is but a man;

The prophet is the servant of our God;

Bid Ahab come, I fain would speak with him.

*(Obadiah enters the palace. From the distance the shouts of revelry and sounds of music come. Elijah is enraged and continues to speak.)*

To think that Israel should have come to this!

Jehovah's prophets driven like the beasts

To find a shelter from the wicked queen;

His altars overthrown, his laws despised;

Abominations filling all the land;

An end must come to all this wickedness.

*(Ahab appears, and Elijah at once begins railing upon him.)*

Thou weak and wicked king, thou Omri's son;

Thy sire at least was brave though evil, too:

Thou hast his weakness, nothing of his strength:

The wicked harlot thou dost call thy wife,

Who sitteth on thy throne as Israel's queen,

Hath caused this sin, and she must meet her doom.

AHAB:

Come, not so strong! Thou speakest of my wife  
And Israel's queen: 'Tis only my respect  
For thee as prophet that doth stay my hand,  
And cause me hesitate to have thee slain.  
Why hatest thou the queen, what hath she done?

ELIJAH:

What hath she done! What hath she left undone!  
The land of Israel she hath caused to sin,  
Brought in false gods and set up heathen shrines;  
A thousand virgins she hath brought to shame;  
Jehovah's altars she hath overthrown  
And in their stead hath placed the shrines of Baal.  
Jehovah will not bless this wicked land,  
But blight the crops and blast the fruitful vines,  
And cause to perish all the flocks and herds.

AHAB:

Thou canst now know, Elijah, whether Baal  
Or thy Jehovah ruleth o'er the earth;  
We only know the fields are full of grain,  
And every brooklet dashing to the sea  
Laugheth in scorn that thou shouldst threaten us.

ELIJAH:

E'en though thy priests may cause the rain to fall,  
Can they command the skies and bid it cease?

AHAB:

Nor can Jehovah; useless is thy threat,  
This verdant land will never waste with drought.

ELIJAH:

As God, the Lord of Heav'n and earth doth live,  
No dew shall form nor any rain descend  
Upon this cursed land, but at my word.  
*(Sudden crash of music ends this scene.)*



ACT II—*The Challenge*

ANNOUNCER: More than three years have passed away since the prophet Elijah appeared so suddenly and spectacularly before the wicked King Ahab and declared that there should be neither rain nor dew in Israel until he should speak the word. Having delivered this message, he disappeared from public gaze and remained in hiding. In the meantime the famine raged in Israel. At first the followers of Baal paid little attention to the threat of the prophet, but as desolation set in, they became enraged and alarmed. King Ahab, himself, instituted a search for Elijah and required the surrounding countries to take an oath that they were not harboring him.

As the scene opens, Obadiah is again in the garden of Ahab's palace. The garden is parched and bare. As Obadiah waits, music is again floating in from a distance, this time a wailing sound of helplessness and despair. Obadiah impatiently walks up and down the garden waiting for Rhoda. At last she appears.

---

RHODA:

Hast thou been waiting long, mine Obadiah?

OBADIAH:

Without thee every moment seemeth years,  
But when thou comest waiting is forgot.  
Would that this cruel famine were at end;  
When it is past and we at last are wed,  
We then may blot this mem'ry from our lives.

RHODA:

And dost thou think Jehovah sent this curse?

OBADIAH:

We know it followed at the prophet's word;  
Would he but come and send us rain again.  
Relief must haste to come or we are lost.

RHODA:

This lovely garden now is dead and bare;  
One little flower only now is left,  
'Tis like our love, it tryeth hard to live,

Warmed by our hopes and watered with our tears.  
But some one cometh—

OBADIAH:

Quickly hide, my sweet; (*She hides.*)  
'Tis Jezebel, the queen. What dost thou here?  
There is a danger that thou mightst be seen.

JEZEBEL:

And if I am, what matter, Obadiah?  
Have I not earned my people's confidence? (*Breaks a little*)  
My only child I gave in sacrifice;  
Of loveless marriage, yet it was *my* child;  
I sadly fed its body to the flames;  
And still the gods disdained to send us aid.  
But rain must come or we shall all be dead.

OBADIAH:

I would to God, Elijah would return,  
Remove the curse and cause the rain to fall.

JEZEBEL:

Though rain should fall I fear it is too late  
To bring me gladness; nothing have I left;  
Far from my home and people, I am wed  
To one who never can be aught to me;  
The child, the tie that bound us now is dead,  
The famine rages on; and only thou  
Canst bring me solace—love me, Obadiah.

OBADIAH:

Thou dost but jest, thou canst not want my love.

JEZEBEL:

Aye, Obadiah, this surely thou must know,  
And as thy queen I now demand thy love.

OBADIAH:

Since thou art queen, this love thou must not own.

JEZEBEL:

Why should I hide my passion, though a queen?  
I am a woman even though the robe

Of royal customs veil my form, and thou  
Art such a man as I could wildly love;  
My lonely heart doth claim thee as its own:  
*(Suspects something wrong by his silence and hesitancy)*  
Or can it be another hath thine heart?  
Dost thou love Rhoda, then, as I suspect?  
Thou needst not answer, silence doth reply:  
I wonder not, she is a lovely wench;  
Her thou mayst wed, but I must have thy love.

OBADIAH:

It cannot be, my queen; this thing is wrong,  
Jehovah's laws forbid adultery,  
I cannot mate with thee, another's wife.

JEZEBEL:

Thou hast no choice but yielding, Obadiah;  
Love me or not, thy love I mean to have:  
I know thy disobedience to the crown,  
How thou hast hid the prophets of thy God—  
Mine heart would break to see thee put to death.

OBADIAH:

I am devoted to the king and queen,  
But still more loyal to Jehovah's laws.

JEZEBEL:

Then, Obadiah, naught is left but this:  
According to the usage of my land  
A lovely maiden must be sacrificed  
To take a message to the shades beyond:  
Yield thou or Rhoda goeth to this fate.

OBADIAH:

Nay, touch her not, for gladly would I die  
That she may not be harmed—

JEZEBEL:

Thou dost not know  
A woman's love nor yet a woman's spite:

No angry priests can harm the man I love,  
His love I now demand or she will die.

OBADIAH:

Thou hast demanded what I cannot give,  
My love is hers; my body may be thine;  
To save her life I grant thee thy demands.  
But flee! for cometh Gaal, the priest of Baal.  
(*Gaal, the high priest of Baal, comes in from hiding.*)

GAAL:

And so the holy priestess and the queen  
Doth with a lowly slave make compromise!  
All Israel's ears shall tingle with the shame:  
What would thy father say did he but know  
Thou barterest for a common servant's lust?

JEZEBEL:

Away with thee! Pray when did Israel's queen  
And Baal's priestess take command from thee?

GAAL:

I do not give command, but Israel's king  
Must answer to his people if the queen  
Shall be discovered in adultery.

JEZEBEL:

There hath no crime been done; away with thee!

GAAL:

'Tis true, I came too soon upon the scene:  
To thee, thou common Israelite, this word:  
Thy Rhoda spurned my love although my name  
I offered her and promised to obey  
The silly laws of wedlock which thou hast:  
I then requested her as bride of Baal,  
Where I might have her for my very own;  
The queen refused, but I am master now.  
She may become the bride of Baal and mine,  
Or as the rain bride she will find her doom.

JEZEBEL:

She will do neither, thou presumptuous priest.

GAAL:

Thou dost prefer, then, that the sorry tale  
Of stolen love 'twixt thee and Obadiah  
Upon the streets of Jezreel shall be told?  
Thou wouldst not serve as virgin at the shrine  
Of Ashtoreth but makest love to slave.  
Thy lover hath no choice, the Hebrew dog  
Will have his body fed to carrion crows.

RHODA (*emerging from hiding*):

I, too, have listened, O thou wicked Gaal;  
Thy wicked scheming all will come to naught:  
Ere I would be thy bride a thousand deaths  
I'd gladly undergo. Tomorrow I  
Will be the rain bride, go to sacrifice,  
And save thy victims from thy cruel plots.  
Nor wilt thou tell the story to the king;  
For if thou speak, all Jezreel soon will know  
That thou wert willing to betray thy king  
If thy demands were met—

OBADIAH:

This cannot be;  
Oh that Elijah now would reappear!  
Perhaps 'tis he who now approacheth us.

ELIJAH (*appearing suddenly*):

Who calleth me? And wherefore didst thou call?

OBADIAH:

Art thou Elijah? Then the Lord be praised.

ELIJAH:

I am Elijah: Go and tell the king.

OBADIAH:

And wouldst thou have me tell him thou art here,  
And he be angered if thou dost not stay?

For we have searched for thee in every land,  
And now thou sayest: Go and tell the king.

ELIJAH:

As God, the Lord, whom I obey doth live,  
The king shall find me when thou dost return.  
(*Obadiah enters the castle. Music from the distance*)

AHAB:

And art thou he that troubleth Israel?

ELIJAH:

It is not I that troubleth, but 'tis thou;  
Jehovah thou hast spurned and followed Baal:  
Tomorrow we shall make a test of gods:  
Bring thou thy prophets all to Carmel's height.

AHAB:

It shall be done. Pray what thing wilt thou do?

ELIJAH:

Tomorrow we shall make a test of power;  
Earth, air and water, hath Jehovah ruled;  
Tomorrow we shall see who ruleth fire.

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### ACT III—*The Contest*

ANNOUNCER: So Ahab sent among the children of Israel and gathered together the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. And on the morrow the mountain top was the scene of a contest between Elijah and these prophets. Matched against eight hundred and fifty of these men, Elijah proposed an astounding test. A bullock was given to the priests of Baal and one to Elijah. Each of these bullocks was cut up and laid upon altars on which no fire was built. The god who could send down fire to consume the sacrifice was to be acclaimed the true God. From early morn until noon these prophets of Baal implored the assistance of their god. At last they grew frenzied and leaped upon the altar cutting themselves with their knives. They grew even more frenzied as Elijah taunted them, and so they cried the louder: "O Baal, hear us."

As the scene opens, it is the time for the evening sacrifice.  
(*There is the cry of exhausted and frantic priests to Baal.*  
*Phonograph record of mob scene may be played for background.*)

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LEADER:

We call upon thee, do thou help us, Baal:

PEOPLE:

Oh, Baal, hear us, hear and answer prayer;

LEADER:

Behold the bullock which our hands have slain  
And laid before thee for a sacrifice;

PEOPLE:

Oh, Baal, hear us, hear and answer prayer;

LEADER:

Oh send the sacred flames from heaven now;  
Avenge the insults which thy foes have given  
In that they say that thou art not a god.

PEOPLE:

Oh, Baal, hear us, hear and answer prayer.

LEADER:

Send down the fire, consume the sacrifice.

PEOPLE:

Oh, Baal, hear us, hear and answer prayer.

ELIJAH:

How long 'twixt two opinions do ye halt?  
Are ye not yet convinced Baal is no god?  
From morn ye called till now, the evening hour;  
His work is done, his sleeping must be ended,  
Ye surely must have tested him enough.  
Now will I show ye who is God, the Lord:  
Bring water now and drench the sacrifice,  
Bring more a second time and then a third. (*Noise of  
water*)  
The evening sacrifice is now at hand;

All day ye have besought your god to send  
The fire upon the altar: he hath failed.  
Stand by and see the glory of the Lord.  
(*Speaks to servant*)  
Six times to yonder hilltop thou hast gone  
And scanned the distant sea for signs of rain,  
What hast thou seen?

SERVANT:

Naught but the barren fields,  
The withered wood, a dim and brazen sky.

ELIJAH:

Return once more, the rain is sure to fall:  
(*Servant leaves. Elijah prays.*)  
Lord God of Israel, God of heav'n and earth;  
Let it be known today that thou art God;  
Send thou the signal of thy sovereignty;  
(*Servant returns.*)  
Thou hast returned, what hast thou to report?

SERVANT:

A cloud no bigger than the hand of man.

ELIJAH:

Go tell the king his chariot to prepare,  
A sound of rain abundant fills the air:  
(*Slight roll of thunder in the distance*)  
If God be god, let fire from heaven fall.  
(*A crash of thunder as the altar bursts into flames. Cries of  
terror in the distance*)  
Jehovah answereth prayer. Behold the flames!  
Slay the false prophets, let not one escape.  
(*Crash of thunder*)

PEOPLE:

The Lord he is God. The Lord he is God.

CURTAIN



## APPENDIX

### *Play Production*

Many books have been written on the subject of producing plays, any one of which could serve as a guide, but unfortunately most of them are of a highly technical nature or are directed to those who have ample equipment or funds for purchasing the necessary equipment for the mounting of plays in a more or less elaborate manner. While this discussion is by no means complete or exhaustive, it is presented in the hope that the suggestions offered here may make the production of plays simple and effective.

#### CHOICE OF PLAYS

If the producer is to keep the principle of simplicity as the keynote of his dramatic offerings, his first duty and concern must be the selection of plays which will lend themselves to simple, direct treatment. It is impossible to produce plays calling for elaborate scenes, rapid and varied changes in scene, costume, and make-up, unusual and striking lighting and sound effects if we are to keep within the modest budget which limits most of us. Though we may sigh for something magnificent, we must be content to produce those plays which are within the capabilities of our amateur actors and which may be attractively produced without much cost. For the most part plays dealing with more than one scene should be eliminated unless the scenes can be changed swiftly by changing the furniture, properties, hangings, and the like. Long waits between scenes spell disaster and failure. The professional theater employs heavy, cumbersome machinery to change the spectacular scenery frequently called for by the playwright. The turntable, the wagon, the hydraulic lift, and other devices form much of the mystery and account for most of the beauty of the modern theater. Plays which require such equipment are naturally beyond the ability of the amateur.

#### THE THEATER AND STAGE

Most amateur productions are staged in the local school auditorium, in the church, in the Sunday School assembly room, or in the club-room. At the very outset the producer is handicapped by lack

of space. Where plays are to be produced in the church or the assembly hall one must be content with a small low platform with little space for storage of props, scenery, dressing, etc. Very little can be done to remedy the situation because dramatic production is not the major activity in the hall and any subtractions or additions would interfere with the normal use of the building. It may be possible to erect a temporary stage, or to extend the existing platform by using movable trestles on which sections of flooring may be fastened. These are usually so unstable that their use is not recommended. It becomes necessary then for the producer first to conjure up in his mind's eye the actual play in production on his limited stage. Is there enough room for twelve people to move naturally and effectively on the small platform when the necessary furniture, scenery, and properties are in place? If not, then obviously a play which calls for a large group must be cast aside as impractical. What about the entrances and exits? Is there enough space to the right and left of the playing area to conceal the actors when not on stage? Can such space be provided by the use of tall screens or by hanging drapery on small wires? Usually it is fatal to the effectiveness of a play for the audience to see a character approaching the stage or waiting until his entrance cue is given. It is far better to consider these limitations before the play is chosen than to try to overcome impossible obstacles after the play is in production.

### SCENERY

Let us consider the plays in this volume. Let us also suppose that they are to be produced in a church auditorium or similar structure not designed primarily for the production of plays. A small low platform must serve us as a stage with no space at the rear or on either side for off-stage space. Perhaps we can obtain several tall screens which can be placed to the right and left and covered with some neutral colored fabric to form the proscenium wall. If possible such screens should be made and kept for future productions. They should be at least six- or eight-feet wide with a hinged section of equal width so that they will stand alone without the use of nails. The height will depend upon the individual building. Ten feet is a good height for the average hall. These screens should be covered with some fabric heavy enough to keep the light from showing through, yet light enough to be easily shifted. Heavy canvas or ducking, overall cloth, rep, and monk's cloth are effective. Burlap

can be used, but it must be lined as it will not keep out the light. There must be a front curtain. This can be made of the same material as that used on the screens, or of a contrasting color and weave. Usually the draw curtain is simplest, though more elaborate ones can be installed. An unjointed length of one-inch pipe can be fastened to the screens and span the actual stage opening. On this pipe is hung the curtain in two sections by means of heavy harness rings. It can be opened and closed by two people, or it may be operated by a system of cords and pulleys. If possible a valence should hang above this pipe so as to conceal the unsightly mechanical contrivance and also conceal whatever lighting equipment that is suspended above the stage. A discussion of these elements will be made later.

Though the plays under consideration are simple in story, they present technical problems which would tax the ingenuity of a theater if they were mounted realistically. Can they be made simple and yet prove effective? Some sort of scenery will be necessary. The simplest form of scene wall is a set of draperies which can be rearranged to form a variety of shapes. Let us suppose that we have this foundation.

*The Sacrifice of Isaac* calls for three scenes: The Tent of Abraham at Dawn, Mount Moriah at Noon; and Abraham's Tent at Twilight. We find that the tent scene can easily be suggested by hanging the gray or neutral drapery to form three sides of a trapezoid. Simple furnishings such as crude benches which can be picked up in some farmhouse or made quite easily of cheap lumber by the local handy-man and stained a dull brown or gray can be used. A rough table is necessary. A lamp made of an old tin can or piece of tin modeled after the style then in use and equipped with a bit of candle is on the table. Any other pieces of furniture which suggests primitive workmanship could be used, but the scene should not be cluttered up with properties, for it is a tent, therefore hardly an established dwelling. Also remember that it takes time to move furniture on and off the stage and space for storage is at a premium. The scene on the mount could be suggested by removing the furniture and replacing it with a crude altar and perhaps a painted representation of a shrub or two and a painted rock. The altar can be a box or packing-case covered with old burlap and painted to represent stones. A tin pan should be concealed in the top to contain the fire, which is best represented by charcoal, canned heat, or a light globe covered with red and orange gelatine or crepe paper.

*Joseph and His Brethren* also calls for three scenes: Near a Pit on the Road to Egypt; The Throne Room of Pharaoh; Joseph's Reception Room. The same gray drapery arrangement would serve for the first scene with perhaps the suggestion of an old rock wall running across the back. This can be cut from beaverboard and painted, or it can be made by stretching unbleached domestic on a cheap wooden frame and painting to represent stones. Suggestions for painting will be given later. A pile of loose stones would add a bit to the bareness of the scene and offer some business for the brothers as Joseph approaches. Large rocks can be made by padding small boxes with excelsior and covering with cloth and painting in grays and browns. Small stones can be made by covering wads of excelsior or cotton with cloth and sewing somewhat in the manner used in making pillows. These can be painted and will be far better than actual stones. The making of such properties will give work to the large group who want to work but can't act or paint. Pharaoh's palace and Joseph's room must suggest splendor. Egyptian architecture could be studied for color, decoration, and form in nearly any library. Gray is most certainly out, though if necessary it can be relieved by attaching an Egyptian frieze painted on cheap gold-colored cloth in black, green, maroon, and vivid blue. There are many wall-hangings to be found which will offer suggestions as to color and design. This frieze might be made on heavy butcher's paper. The throne should "set" the stage. Most churches have pulpit chairs which are of good line—straight with high backs and heavy arms. Over this chair could be draped a piece of rich material which would hide the identity of the chair but not conceal its lines. On the wall behind and above the throne might be pinned a cloth or paper painting in correct proportions of the winged beetle or the winged sun. These motifs could be copied from any book on Egypt. A brasier on a tripod (someone's cast-off fern stand gilded for the occasion) with a bit of incense burning in it could be placed to one side of the stage, and two slaves with large gaudy fans on long poles standing on each side of the throne would complete the picture and suggest the splendor of the court. The fans should be flat and are best made of heavy cardboard. They may be painted in the proper design and color. Joseph's room should be more simple but equally rich, for it is in a palace also. Another frieze in more subdued colors, and perhaps not so wide, could be fastened to the draperies quickly with pins. A low couch or bench over which is thrown a gaudy covering in stripes can be used. A cylindrical pillow

of the same or of contrasting material can be placed at the head. A tabourette of simple design is near the couch and on it are an Egyptian lamp and several parchment scrolls. Perhaps near it is a cylindrical wastepaper basket filled with other scrolls. These scrolls should be made of heavy wrapping paper fastened to two light round sticks such as broomsticks. The ends of the sticks can be carved, or knobs may be fastened on and these painted. The scrolls should be decorated with picture writing. The audience can tell if the paper is blank.

*The Mission of Moses* has three scenes: The Home of Moses; The Palace of Pharaoh; Near Mount Sinai. The first scene might be somewhat like the tent scene for *The Sacrifice of Isaac* with perhaps a bit more furniture. Remember that it is the home of a slave and the furnishings must be plain and primitive in design. The palace scene has been suggested as has the scene on the mount. For the second part of this scene quick changes could be made by placing a few set rocks or bushes to suggest the mountain top.

*The Rain Bride* requires three changes of scene: The Garden; The Same, three years later; Mount Carmel. For the garden the gray draperies and some simple trimmings such as a stone bench (or, what is better, a wooden one painted to represent stone), a few tall painted cypress trees, the suggestion of a wall across the rear, a large jar or two with ivy or other vines growing out of them will be ample. Here one might be tempted to arrange masses of natural growth with home-grown blossoms to form our conception of a garden. Avoid the use of natural herbage. Keep the scene flat with simple tree forms cut from heavy builder's board such as beaverboard and painted conventionally to represent the trees and shrubs. The jars can also be of beaverboard. Make them perfectly flat and paint them with shadows and highlights. Rely on the aesthetic placement of a few forms which can be quickly removed and stored out of sight in a limited space. The time lapse may be suggested by rearrangement, or it may be ignored. The mountain scene has already been suggested. Here the barren hilltop is shown with its altar. The final effect of smoke and flame can only be suggested. It is far better to leave such phenomena to the imagination than to ruin the effect of the play by a crude and often ludicrous attempt at realism.

*Samson and Delilah* requires five scenes and presents more real difficulties in production than can be overcome by the average group. If possible it should be presented as a radio novelty rather than as an actual stage production. The home of Samson could be represented

in a manner similar to Moses' home. Delilah's house should reflect the barbaric sensuousness of that celebrated lady. An elaborate couch with a rich and barbaric spread, a small dressing table with various jars, and vials of ointments and cosmetics with a primitive mirror would help suggest the atmosphere here. The street near Samson's prison might be suggested merely by the gray draperies and a wall. The actual prison would require a small grated window high in the wall, a crude bench on which might be a pottery jar, a pile of straw in one corner, and a huge wooden beam to which Samson might be chained. The difficulty here is that the author requires Delilah to pass directly into the prison from the street scene. The temple scene is entirely beyond simple suggestion, and its destruction could be accomplished only by a Griffith or a De Mille.

*The Shepherd King* can be simply set in spite of its four scenes. The scene in front of the tent could be played before an opening made in the rear draperies with sentinels standing guard on each side of the opening. The scene in Saul's tent could be played in the gray draperies with a rough table, a bench, and a crude couch draped with striped material. If possible, pieces of armor such as swords, shields, spears should be on the walls. The edge of the battlefield could be played in the gray draperies without ornament. David's palace would require somewhat the same type of treatment as was used in Pharaoh's palace, though of course the decorations and properties must be of Hebrew design. Suggestions for these motifs could be obtained from old illustrated Bibles which contain beautiful colored pictures offering suggestions for costumes also. Children's books of Bible stories also offer suggestions.

So we see that, although our scenery has been quite simple, yet with the use of restraint and fidelity to our simple scheme we may suggest a variety of scenes effectively and beautifully without much expense or labor. These scenes can be made as elaborate as means and time permit, but the simpler the scene the more effective will be the play and the more lasting the lesson which it presents.

### MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION

Even with the use of the simplest forms of scenery the producer must inevitably come to the question of materials, their cost, and the methods of construction. Of course it goes without question that the richer the materials used in draperies and costumes the better the effect, but there are certain inexpensive materials which are bet-

ter than others and which will give a pleasing effect in spite of their low cost.

Since the foundation for the effects suggested is a set of neutral colored draperies, our first consideration is material. The question of color must be settled first, and the color scheme of the building in which the plays are to be presented should be taken into consideration so that there will be no harsh and unpleasant clash between the stage picture and the adjacent walls. Black is quite desirable for interior settings since it gives the effect of spaciousness and will throw into relief any scenic units and costumes which are played before it. It does not, however, lend itself very well to exterior scenes. If it is possible to have two sets of draperies, one of them should be black. If the predominating color of the building is brown or tan, the draperies should harmonize in shade. A light tan or taupe, a rich brown, or a gray-green would be most useful in this case. If gray will harmonize with the surroundings, the drapes should be of this color as it will serve for both interior and exterior scenes. There are a variety of grays, and one which is not too dark or too light should be chosen. The weave and weight of the material are also of great importance. The heavier the material the more beautiful will be the folds, for soft, heavy fabric hangs in deep rich lines. Velvets and velours are best, but they are expensive. Cheap velour does not wear well, loses its color rapidly, and soon looks quite dowdy. If it is a question of a cheap velour or a good grade of rep, monk's cloth, or duvetyne, the latter should be chosen. The last-named materials are quite good and may be had in a variety of shades with the price ranging downward from one dollar a yard. Duvetyne is softer and more pleasing in appearance, but it does not wear quite as well as the other two. Rep is the most durable material available; it is stiff, however. The curtains can be made by anyone who can sew accurately. It is better to allow fifty per cent fullness for these drapes and for the front curtain, though one-third fullness can be used with heavy materials. The back wall of the trapezoid should be made in four sections, each a distinct unit in itself, allowing a foot on each section for lapping over the next section. The side walls should be made in three sections, each with the one-foot lappage allowed. There should be at least two borders running across the entire width of the acting area to hide the space above the stage and the ropes, lights, and other mechanism stored there. These borders will vary in width according to the height of the proscenium wall and opening. They will vary in length with the length of the acting space. If the

stage is very deep, more borders should be used. The usual rule is a border for each six feet of depth. It is better to have the drapes lined if possible, but if the budget will not permit, the lining may be omitted. Lining should be made of flame-proofed sateen. The same color as the draperies should be used. The construction of the draperies is as follows:

First measure the height of the drapery wall in feet and inches. Next measure the length of the back wall of the trapezoid and of each side wall. Now add fifty per cent to the back wall and to the total side walls and divide by three. This will give you the number of thirty-six-inch strips needed. Of course if the material decided upon is more or less than thirty-six inches, the width of the material must be divided into the total length. Now multiply the number of strips by the length of each strip, and you will get the amount of material needed for the scene walls. The seams for draperies must be vertical, not horizontal. Now measure the length of the opening between the side walls at the front. This is the first border. Measure across from wall to wall six feet back of the first border for the second border, and so on for the succeeding ones. Unless the proscenium opening is very low the first border should be at least four feet wide, the second three, and the succeeding ones three. Add fifty per cent for fullness and divide by the width of the material. Multiply by the width of the border for the total amount of material. The material must be hemmed; so allow three or four inches for each strip and add to the total. Cut the necessary number of strips the right length. It is best to lay the material flat on a large table and cut by a snapped chalk line each time. Sew each section individually, being careful not to pucker the seams. As each section is completed, baste up the allowed hem at the bottom. Suppose the back wall is twenty feet. We wish four sections. Therefore each section will be five feet plus the extra foot for lapping. We have allowed fifty per cent for fullness; so each section will require three thirty-six-inch widths of material. Now cut strips of three-inch burlap webbing the length of each section or six feet long. We now pleat the nine feet of material on the six-foot webbing and baste along the two edges to hold the pleats flat. It is now sewed on the machine with good heavy thread. The same process is used for the side walls and borders and for the front curtain. If rearrangement of the sections is anticipated, it is best to sew the material flat on the webbing without pleats and gather the fullness in as the sections are hung on the wire or rods which will support them on the stage.



The curtains are now complete with the exception of sewing in the hem. Usually the webbing is equipped with grommets to aid in hanging. Small brass grommets five-eighths of an inch in diameter are best. These grommets should be placed every six inches along the top of the webbing about one inch from the edge. Into each finished grommet tie a two-foot piece of heavy mason's twine. If the grommets cannot be afforded, holes may be cut in the webbing, and the two-foot strings tied through these, but the wear and tear will soon ruin the top of the drapes. The curtains may be hung on heavy wires, but it is hard to keep them from sagging. Pieces of pipe may be suspended from the ceiling or supported from the floor, or a temporary frame of light wood may be used. Hang the curtains by tying them on the wire, pipe, or wood. If the basted hems are even, they may be sewed on the machine. If there is any unevenness, it may be corrected, and then the hems machined. It will help the hang of the curtains if small well chain is put in the hems or is put in a canvas casing and sewed on the back of the drape along the hem line. There are several good books which illustrate the various methods of hanging drapes and front curtains. One of the best is *Scenery and Lighting* by Selden and Sellman.

The set pieces, such as rocks and trees, walls and shrubs, can be made of beaverboard with enough wood framing on the back to hold them rigid. Usually a small wooden brace is fastened to the back to keep them in an upright position. These pieces are best painted with dry or distemper paint mixed with size water. The paints can be secured at most large paint or hardware stores or may be ordered from George Watson Co., Chicago, Ill. Cook one pound of granulated carpenter's glue (light amber) in one gallon of water in a water jacket or double boiler for two hours. Put one cup of this mixture to a half gallon of water to make size water. In painting do not try to be too realistic. Remember that it is the effect, not realism, that one should strive for. Poster colors can be used but will prove expensive for large pieces. Oil paint should never be used. Unbleached domestic stretched on a wooden frame and treated with a coat of sizing or priming can be painted effectively with any cold water paint. To make priming, add four cups of strong glue mixture to a gallon of water and add four pounds of Spanish whiting. Use as paint and stir often.

#### PROPERTIES

Under the head of properties comes the large assortment of articles used on the stage such as furniture, crockery, scrolls, fans, etc. The

list would be infinite in length, but a few of the most needed articles are suggested here. Furniture, for the most part, should be made from old crates or packing-cases and covered with beaverboard or domestic and painted with cold water paint. It is foolish to suppose that a piece of modern furniture could pass for Biblical period. With a little imagination and much ingenuity most of the furniture can be constructed easily and cheaply. Artificial flowers should be used. Either purchase them or make them of crepe paper. Real flowers do not show up well on the stage. Good pieces of pottery can frequently be borrowed. Be careful of the shape and color. Jugs and jars can be modeled in clay and cast in plaster of paris or papier mache. Directions can be found on the subject in most public libraries. Censers, lamps, and the like can be fashioned from old cans and gilded. Crowns can be cut from tin or cardboard and gilded and set with jewels from the ten-cent store. Swords and shields can be cut from tin and treated with aluminum or bronze paint. Shields can be cut from beaverboard and decorated with papier mache and bronzed. David's harp can be fashioned of wood and waxed twine. Most small boys are adept at such things. Moses' tablets should be cast of thin plaster of paris so that they will break when thrown down.

#### COSTUMES

Again we have a list which is entirely too lengthy for detailed comment. The chief concerns of the costumer are line, color, and silhouette. It is necessary that the important characters stand out from their surroundings, and so contrasting colors should be used. The use of warm and cool colors will also help emphasize the main characters. The old illustrated Bibles and children's story books will furnish valuable suggestions. Egyptian histories, stories, and wall-hangings will prove helpful. The Egyptians dressed for the most part in linen. Their costumes were unornamented usually. Perhaps a border may be painted at the hem, neck, and on the sleeves. They depended upon jeweled belts, collars, necklaces, arm bands, rings, and earrings for ornament. These costumes vary in style and should be checked in the library before attempting the Moses and Joseph plays. The Hebrew characters reflect the customs of their captors. The material should be unbleached domestic dyed in the proper shades; striped materials are good especially for headdresses. Jeweled collars, belts, etc., can be made of flexible cardboard or oil-cloth painted with metallic paint. Beads can be made of soda straws cut in varying lengths, painted and strung together; they may be

varied by using small cardboard discs. Colored sealing wax may be heated and applied to the cardboard, soda straws, etc., to gain good effects if the time and expense are warranted. Occasionally the attic and cast-off clothes bag will yield useful materials, but for the most part avoid old piano covers, scarfs, mufflers, etc., which do not give an authentic picture and are hard to work into the color scheme. Sometimes they may be used along with striped blankets and chenille portiers to make cloaks and over drapes. The remnant counters and bargain basements offer surprising values in materials which can be used. The cheaper grades of awnings and tickings can be used advantageously as can some of the Hallowe'en materials. Joseph's coat should be made of strips of sateen in various colors and sewed together. Sew the strips to form a sheet of material, then cut the coat, and make according to design. The result will repay the effort involved. Prophets can be costumed in burlap with a cord about the waist. Priests wore elaborate costumes with a sort of turban headdress. Materials most useful will be outing or cotton flannel. It may be had in pastel colors and white. It takes dye very well. Sateen is useful for the richer costumes. Velvetene is useful for royal robes and drapes.

The Hebrew costumes for men consisted of a long tight-fitting tunic with armholes or wide sleeves, with a large opening at the neck. For the wealthy class handsome materials were used with borders bound in bright contrasting colors. These were usually of linen, though cotton and wool were used, especially by the poor. The outer garment or mantle was a square piece of material large enough to permit of wrapping about the body. In ancient times a fold of this drape covered the head, held in place by a ring of rope or twisted cloth. Later the Eastern turban was introduced. The women dressed as colorfully and as richly as they could afford. Embroidery formed the chief decoration. Colors were blues, purples, scarlets, and yellows. Bracelets and necklaces, as well as arm bands and earrings, were worn by both men and women, and were usually of heavy beaten metal. Women wore loose tunics fitted at the waist with a girdle or cord which hung in loose ends well down the skirt on the right side. The headdress varies, but usually covered the hair. Soldiers' costumes are difficult to make if attempts at period armor are made. The best solution of the soldier's uniform is to follow somewhat the idea of the Roman soldier—a tight-fitting shirt with loose sleeves about halfway to the elbow. On this is pleated a short full skirt which reaches just above the knee. This costume

should be made in dark colors in brown, red, rust, or green. The breast may be painted in outline fish-scale effect with a metallic paint. A helmet, shield, short sword or spear, and leggings made of oil cloth painted with metallic paint will complete the effect. The soldier's uniform should be simple and striking, and where several appear together they should be identical. If sandals are preferred to leggings, they may be made by sewing one-inch heavy tape or strips of cloth to the inner soles which may be had at the ten-cent stores. The strips should be long enough to cross-lace well above the ankle. Footwear for all the characters can be modeled on these inner soles. Old tennis shoes can be cut down and new tops modeled upon them using cloth or oil cloth. The Soothsayers in the Joseph play should wear long dark robes with rather full sleeves. Around the hems may be painted a border of the signs of the zodiac and some large flat emblem worn on a chain around the neck. They should carry slender rods about eighteen inches long and each should have some magical talisman in his hand such as a crystal ball, a horse-hair switch, a six-pointed star, a skull, some small animal or bird, etc.

In planning the costumes it will be well to contrast the cool colors blue, green, and violet with the warm colors red, orange, and yellow. Particularly is this true where two individuals clash such as Pharaoh and Moses, Joseph and his brethren, Elijah and Ahab, David and Saul.

### MAKE-UP

Where the lighting is soft and natural, less make-up is needed than where strong light is used. Make-up is used to intensify natural features or to change completely the contour and expression of the face. A little make-up judiciously placed is far better than a quantity misplaced. Experimentation is necessary to get the right effect under the conditions of the local theater. The make-up should be tried out under the lighting to be used at least twice before the public performance. This is the only sure way of having the right effect. Study the actor's face to determine where the individual's features must be emphasized and where they must be made obscure. Make-up consists for the most part in highlighting features which need emphasizing, and shading those which are too prominent. If race or nationality is to be accentuated, then the make-up committee must study the particular characteristics of the nationality in question and experiment to find out what can be done to gain the desired effect under the lighting which will be used for the production. For the most part the plays in this volume deal with the Hebrew. Most

prominent of the features will be the nose. The actor's nose can be changed by the application of "nose putty," which can be purchased from any dealer in make-up materials. The nose is modeled just as a sculptor would model it in clay. The face must be free of grease and the putty pressed firmly on the skin to make it hold. Sometimes where the mass is large and heavy it may be necessary to paint the skin with spirit gum before the putty is applied. After the right shape has been obtained the face and putty structure is greased with cold cream and the paint applied as in ordinary make-up.

Each organization should have a fairly complete set of make-up materials. The average kit should contain: theatrical cold cream, sticks of pink No. 1, juvenile No. 6, middle age No. 10, sunburn No. 8, old age, No. 12, and olive No. 13; lining colors in gray No. 5, brown No. 7, carmine No. 12, blue No. 9, black No. 17, and white No. 15. There should be a pot of moist rouge medium, a box of theatrical dry rouge No. 18. There should be one can of each of the following powders: pink No. 2 1-2, flesh No. 4, Nos. 5 or 6. Then there should be several powder puffs, several red sable water color brushes No. 1, a dusting brush for the powder, a comb and brush, cleansing tissue, brown, black, and white mascara. If needed there must be a supply of nose putty, black wax for blocking out teeth, spirit gum for sticking on crepe hair used in beards and moustaches, and black, white, gray, and brown crepe hair. A stick of purple liner No. 21 will be found useful for making lines and wrinkles. Wheatcroft is excellent for whitening the hair as well as for its normal use as liquid powder. The numbers listed above are for the Stein products, since these are more easily obtained than some of the other brands, and are less expensive. These products are put up in durable containers and retain their moisture for a long period if well cared for.

The method of procedure in a normal make-up is as follows: first, cleanse the face with cold cream, working the grease into the pores of the skin and into the edges of the hair and the eyebrows. Now wipe off most of the cold cream with cleansing tissue or a soft cloth. The face should have just the barest shine. Next make several streaks of No. 1 grease paint on the forehead, down the nose, on each cheek, the chin, and under the jaw. With the finger tips blend this color into the No. 1 base. Be sure that there are no streaks or rather pasty appearance. With the No. 6 liner make a bold streak on the forehead just above the eyebrows, high on each cheek bone, down the nose, on the chin, and along the lower jaw bone. Blend

this color into the No. 1 base. Be sure that there are no streaks or patches of paint. With the No. 6 stick put a bright patch on each cheek bone up near the eye and blend into a crescent. Shade the eyelid with No. 7 liner for men and for both men and women when middle-aged, with No. 9 liner for juvenile women. Put a patch of color on the lid and blend over the eye with the finger, making it darkest near the nose. The shape of the eye may be changed by the placement of this shadow. The cheeks must be brightened by the judicious application of moist rouge and the lips touched up with moist rouge. Men do not have full red lips as a rule, and care must be taken to keep them natural. With the paint brush and the No. 6 or No. 17 liner touch up the eyebrows, lengthening and shaping them according to the character. Draw a fine line under the lower lashes and extending about half an inch beyond the eye slit. If all the paint is well blended, and the desired effect has been gained, the face is given a generous application of powder. Use No. 2 1-2 for juvenile women, No. 4 for juvenile men and middle-aged men and women, No. 5 or No. 6 for old-age and for sunburned or olive complexions. Do not rub the face with the puff. Load the puff generously and pat the powder on gently until no more will adhere to the face. Then brush off all that can be removed with the "baby brush" or face brush. Now touch up the eyebrows and lashes with mascara, moisten the lips, and if necessary touch up the cheeks with the dry rouge No. 18 using a hare's foot or the rolled powder puff. If beard or moustache is to be applied it is done at this stage.

Character make-up is the most difficult and can be achieved only after painstaking practice and experiment. It is here that the make-up committee become artists or mere daubers. Pictures should be studied for line, contour, and coloration. The effects are gained by highlights and shadows and by lines. Lines are drawn with the No. 1 water color brush and lining color. Beards are frequently called for and require some skill and much painstaking effort if they are to look natural. First, the hair is prepared. This should be done well in advance, for it requires some time. If the fuzzy type of beard or moustache is to be used, the crepe hair must be gently separated by picking the fibers apart with a coarse-toothed comb. Do not attempt to comb the crepe hair as one would human hair. Allow for some waste and loss. For a full beard and moustache about three-quarters of a yard of crepe braid should be combed out. Where straight hair is needed, as for the flowing beards of prophets and patriarchs, first remove the string from the braid and then soak the

hair for a few minutes in warm water. Then tie a string to each end of the braid. Tie one end to a nail fairly high on the wall. To the other end attach a light weight so that the braid will be kept straight without kinks. When the hair is dry, it will resemble straight human hair and can be used straight or can be curled slightly with a warm curling iron. This form is far superior to the kinky mass which results from combing the braid. Following the beard line or moustache line, paint the skin with spirit gum. This is the only preparation which will hold securely. Cut the prepared hair in desired lengths and press onto the gummed skin. Allow the fibres to fall in the direction of the natural hair. Do not try to shape the beard as it is applied, but be careful to get an even coat of hair growing in a natural direction. When the hair is in place, press it into the gum gently but firmly and allow it to set. Then with sharp-pointed shears trim the beard to the shape desired. Be careful to trim quite close around the nostrils and lips so that no fine hairs will tickle the actor and annoy him. Crepe hair may be used to change the eyebrows. Spirit gum will not injure the skin or hair, but will be painful if applied over cuts or scratches. To remove the beard, first pull off all hair possible. Then remove the grease paint as usual with a cold cream massage. If any of the spirit gum is left on the skin, it may be removed with alcohol. The only time crepe hair may be used without separating the fibres is in building an Egyptian beard, moustache, or wig. These peoples shaved off their natural hair and used wigs and artificial beards and moustaches of wool. The crepe hair therefore lends itself admirably to the fashioning of these kinky black wigs and beards. Since most of the characters in these plays will require the olive or No. 13 base, let us consider a typical problem. *The Mission of Moses* will furnish a few typical examples.

Moses is a fairly young man, at the opening of the play. Cover the face with cold cream and massage well. Remove the excess grease with tissue and apply an even but light coat of No. 13 grease paint. With No. 10 (middle-age) tint the face by drawing a fairly heavy line across the forehead above the eyebrows, on each cheek bone, down the "putty" nose, on the chin, and along the lower jaws. Now blend this into the olive base. With moist rouge touch up the jaw bone under the eye, blending into a crescent well down on the cheek. Touch up the lips a bit also with moist rouge. With the No. 7 liner shade the inner corner of the eye-socket and the top lid, blending the shadow out beyond the corner of the eye about a half inch. Shade down the sides of the nose to throw it into relief. With

the No. 1 brush and No. 7 liner draw a fairly dark but thin line under the lower lashes and out beyond the eye-socket a half inch. Shape the eyebrows with the same color and extend them outward to cover the enlarged eye. Perhaps a slight vertical line upwards from the left eye onto the brow, say three-quarters of an inch, and another downward from the curve of the nostrils following the natural crease in the face (on each side of the nose) may be drawn. Do not make these lines heavy. Since he is in the class of Egyptian nobility, he will have no beard. Cover the face with No. 6 powder and brush vigorously. Touch up the eyebrows with mascara, and perhaps add a faint touch of dry rouge. At the end of the play he will require a change of make-up as he grows older. Darken the eye-socket with No. 7 liner. Draw some fine but distinct lines around the eye and out onto the cheeks with No. 21 liner. Remove the dry rouge by powdering with No. 6 powder. Gray the eyebrows by rubbing the No. 15 liner across them. Add an iron gray beard if desired in the scene with Pharaoh. At the end of the play when he is quite old the face must be pale. Remove the eye-shading by applying a little cold cream and wiping off the paint with tissue. Shade the eye with No. 5 gray and blend a little No. 12 grease over the gray. Paint in a number of fine wrinkles around the eye with No. 21 liner. Whiten the eyebrow with No. 15 liner, or stick white crepe hair on over the natural eyebrow. Make these bushy by rubbing the No. 15 liner back and forth and pulling the hair down. Put a bit of cold cream on the cheeks and apply No. 12 grease paint. Shade the sides of the nose with No. 5 liner and blend some of the No. 12 grease over the gray. Draw in some thin but distinct wrinkles on the brow and at the eye-corners, also from the nose down to the mouth corners leaving about a half inch between the actual mouth and the line in No. 21. Remove the gray beard and add a long flowing white one made of soaked wool. Shade in between the fingers with No. 21 liner and highlight the knuckles with No. 1 grease paint. Powder the face and hands with No. 4 powder and brush.

Miriam can be a straight juvenile with olive skin, on which has been blended some No. 6 grease paint. The cheeks should be brightened with moist rouge and the lips touched up with the same. The eye should be slightly shaded with No. 9 liner. If she is a dark brunette, No. 21 may be used. Powder with No. 5 powder and brush.

Pharaoh should have a fairly heavy coat of olive grease paint



tinted with No. 8 (sunburn) grease. His cheeks should be barely tinted with moist rouge, and his lips should be straight and thin. His eye should be shaded with No. 7 liner. His eyebrows should be painted with black liner No. 17, and the line under his eye should be fairly heavy in No. 17. Look up the Egyptian eye to see exactly how they painted this line. The beard should be made of black wool with the fibres barely separated by pulling apart with the fingers. These short, straight curls cut off square at the bottom are usually apparent in Egyptian paintings and carvings. Use No. 6 powder. The guards should be shaven and quite sunburned. Aaron should be similar to Moses, but might wear a dark brown beard, for he is a Hebrew in caste. The mother should be pale with eye-sockets and cheeks sunken and fine wrinkles on the brow, at the eye-corners and down the cheeks from the nose. The shading is done first with No. 5 gray liner over which is blended No. 12 grease. The wrinkles and lines may be drawn in with No. 21 liner or with No. 5 alongside of which is drawn a parallel line of No. 7. The lips should be thin and puckered with a slight purplish cast. The lip lines are drawn from inside the lip outward to about one-half inch beyond the lip line. Use the same colors as used in the other wrinkles. Eyebrows may be whitened with mascara or with No. 15 liner. Powder with No. 4 and brush.

A few general hints may prove helpful. Old people have very little variation in complexion. The face is usually the same hue, but the bones produce highlights (lighter color) and the hollows produce shadows (gray over which has been blended the complexion tint—usually No. 12). High-born persons and persons who lead sheltered or indoor lives are of a paler complexion than those who live out of doors. Use less complexion tint (No. 6, No. 10, No. 11, No. 12 grease). Women have more color in the cheeks and lips than men. Be careful not to make the men look effeminate because of too much color. Soldiers, workmen, farmers, sailors, prophets, in fact, all those who live out of doors will have ruddy skins. Use No. 8 (sunburn) to gain this effect. Also these people will have eyebrows which are fairly close together and will have fine wrinkles at the eye-corners due to squinting in the glare of the sun. Unless there is a headdress which covers the back of the neck this must be painted as is the face. The hands, too, and the arms and legs must correspond in color to the face. A ruddy-faced soldier with lily white hands will be ridiculous as will be an old man with strong young

hands. Where the arms and legs must be colored do not use grease paint, for it will be hard to put on, harder to remove, and expensive. Use a liquid paint or "body wash," as it is called. This may be obtained from Max Factor's Studios in Hollywood, California, in any number of shades. Or it can be made at home by dissolving powder of the desired shade in glycerine to which has been added some rose water to counteract the odor. This mixture is applied with a sponge and it may be washed off with soap and water.

Remember that too much make-up is worse than none at all. Use it with discrimination. The whole source and secret of success in make-up depends upon practice and experiment. Valuable booklets illustrating various types of character make-up can be had from Max Factor's Studios for a small fee. There are several excellent books on the subject. *Make-Up*, by John F. Baird, published by Samuel French, New York City, and *The Art of Make-Up*, by Helena Chalmers, published by D. Appleton-Century Company, New York City, are two of the best reference books on the subject.

### LIGHTING

There is only one way to light a production adequately and effectively and that is by using regulation theatrical spotlights and floodlights. These units can be bought for about twelve or fifteen dollars each. There should be at least six baby spotlights (200 to 400 watts) and two small box floodlights (200 to 400 watts) equipped with color frames. There should be a supply of theatrical gelatines in straw, frost, daylight blue, moonlight blue, and pink. A few sheets of fire red will be useful in getting the effect of fire, though red crepe paper can be used. It is only by using these units that one can be safe from the danger of fire. There are several makeshifts which can be used with more or less risk and with less effectiveness. Large coffee cans can be fitted with a socket and a 100-watt lamp used to form a spot. There should be an asbestos jacket around the can and at the end to take care of the heat. Frames of wood or tin can be made to hold the colored gelatine to get colored light. These may be hung back of the valence or front border. Floodlights can be made of larger cans. Footlights can be made by lining a wooden trough with bright tin and spacing the sockets about eight inches on centers. Sixty-watt globes should be used, and if colored lights are needed, the globes may be dyed with Colorine, a commercial preparation which may be had in red, blue, and yellow. A border of lights to stretch across the stage back of the valence or first border can be

made in a similar manner. The footlights and border lights should be arranged in sections. One for red one for blue and one for yellow with the colors alternating and each color controlled by a separate switch so that the stage may be made blue or red or whatever color is desired. Gelatines and lighting equipment may be had from Standard Stage Lighting Co., 1417 Avenue K, Brooklyn, N. Y., or Capitol Stage Lighting Co., 626 Tenth Avenue, New York City.

A. T. WEST.

